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Adventure

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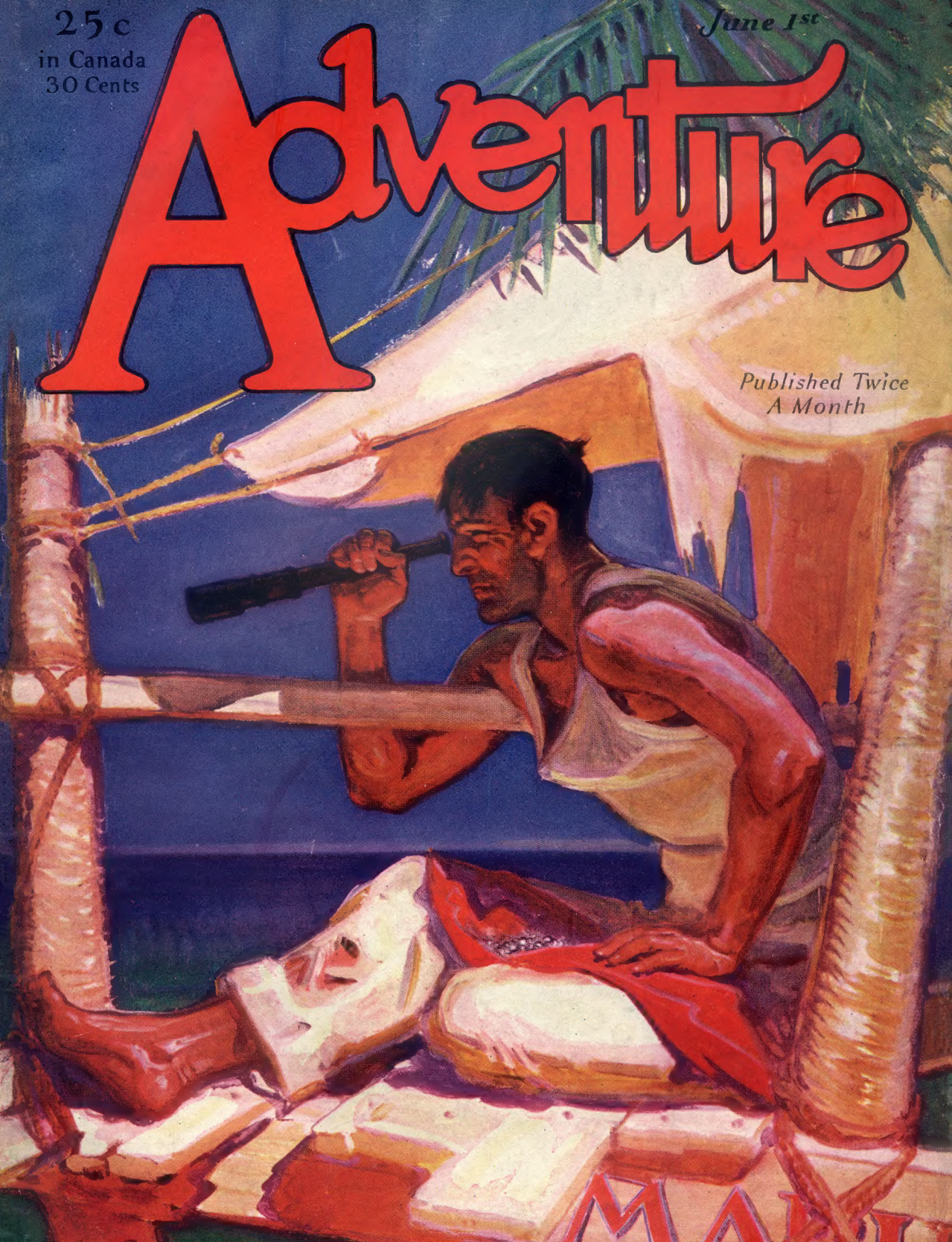

GORDON YOUNG'S Great Novel of the South Seas

•• If There Be Courage ••

ALLAN V. ELSTON · WILKESON O'CONNELL · ROBERT SIMPSON
GENERAL DE NOGALES · RAYMOND S. SPEARS · *and others*

NOBODY PAID ME $1000

"I GUESS you'd call this a testimonial all right, but nobody paid me a thousand dollars for it like they do those society women. I'll be lucky if I get an extra bone. After all it's only a story about my love for the boss, and I don't suppose it's worth much.

"I was just a puppy in a kennel when the boss came and took me away. It was pretty hard leaving my mother, but when I saw the boss' plain, kind face and felt his big, gentle hands, I knew that he and I were going to get along.

"Well, life was simply wonderful. All day long there were cats to chase. Any number of them. I don't think anything's more fun than putting the fear of death into a fat, complacent cat. They say, of course, that it can be overdone, but I doubt it.

"Every night when the boss would come home we'd romp down to the sea and he'd talk to me. Once or twice he let me take a snap at that nasty Chow across the street. A swell guy. And on week-ends we'd go out in his boat with some of his cronies. At night they'd sit around the cabin light and talk about the places they'd been, places they'd like to be, and yachts they'd sailed, and how some day they'd buy a big schooner and go off to the South Sea Islands and grow old in a fig leaf.

" 'A beautiful hand-painted chance you'll have of getting to the South Seas,' laughed one of the boss' friends, 'with the market the way it is, and Elizabeth Carstairs waiting next door. Why, Charlie, my boy, within another six months you'll be doing the lock-step up the dark halls of matrimony. You'll be home thumbing seed catalogues under the eagle eye of the adored one, while stout fellows like myself are braving the raging main.'

" 'She's a wonderful girl!' answered the boss. 'You are simply envious.'

"I guess she was a wonderful girl all right. And beautiful too, with that kind of reserved stately beauty you see in Massachusetts women. The boss adored her. I can't say as much for myself. I would have liked to yap at her heels. She seemed kind of shallow to me—always fussing about little things.

"Suddenly she began to act sort of distant to the boss. They didn't kiss as often as they used to. He seemed to annoy her although he was just as sweet as he could be to her. Naturally, this cold attitude of hers bothered him; he used to sit with his head in his hands wondering what was wrong.

"And at first I didn't have the slightest inkling myself. But later I knew what the trouble was. Or at least I thought I did. After all, a dog's keenest sense is that of smell, and there could be no doubt that the boss' breath wasn't beyond reproach.

"I am only a dog but I know that a man can't get away with a thing like that. The ads say that even a man's best friend won't tell him, but believe me the only reason I didn't tell him was because *I couldn't.* I tried hard enough, but whimpers and barks don't convey much.

"It wasn't long after that she broke the engagement—and his heart, too, I guess. He never went anywhere—not even to his boat. Just moped.

"Then one night he got wise. I like to think I helped him see himself as others—including Miss Carstairs—saw him. It happened this way:

"There was a magazine lying open on the floor where it had fallen from the rack. Face up was one of those Listerine ads. Well, sir, I just went up and put my paw on it and barked till I was hoarse.

" 'For the love of Christmas, keep quiet,' he exclaimed, 'and get off that magazine.'

"Then he picked it up!

"Something made him read it. He read it all the way through.

"He must have taken the hint because he and Miss Carstairs have patched it up. The wedding's next month. And now, if you'll excuse me, there's a little cat trouble outside I'll have to attend to."

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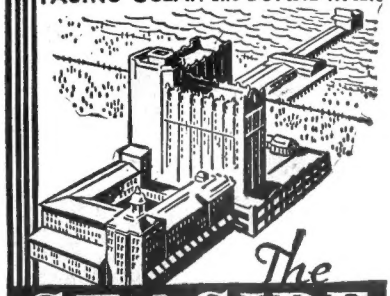

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29x5-00	2.85	1.15
30x5-00	2.85	1.15
28x5-25	2.85	1.15
30x5-25	2.95	1.25
31x5-25	3.10	1.25
30x5-77	3.10	1.25
30x6-00	3.00	1.15
31x6-00	3.10	1.20
32x6-00	3.20	1.35
33x6-00	3.25	1.35
32x6-20	3.40	1.40

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34x4	2.95	1.00
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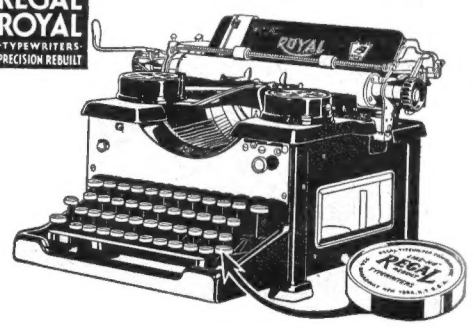

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ADVENTURE
June 1st, 1931

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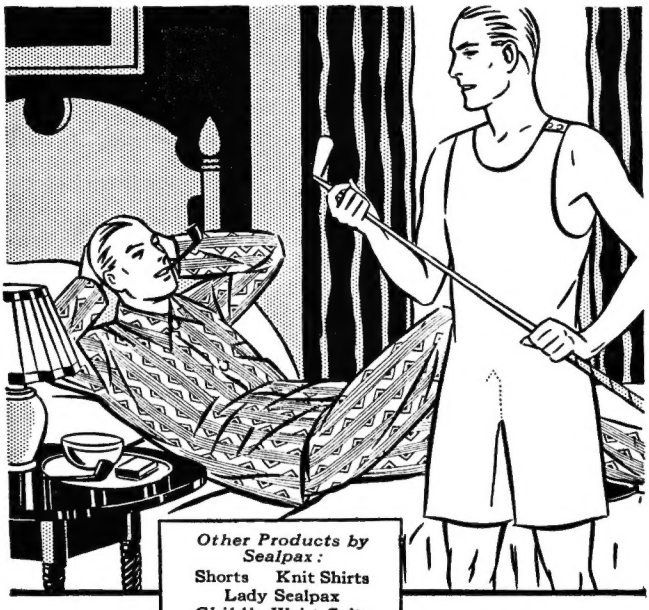
Volume 78
Number 6

"Sealpax makes pajamas, too!"



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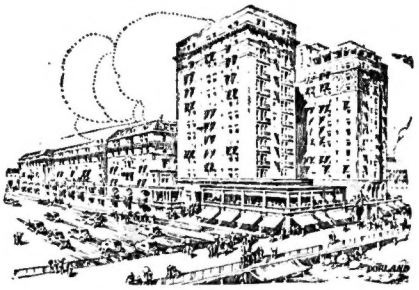

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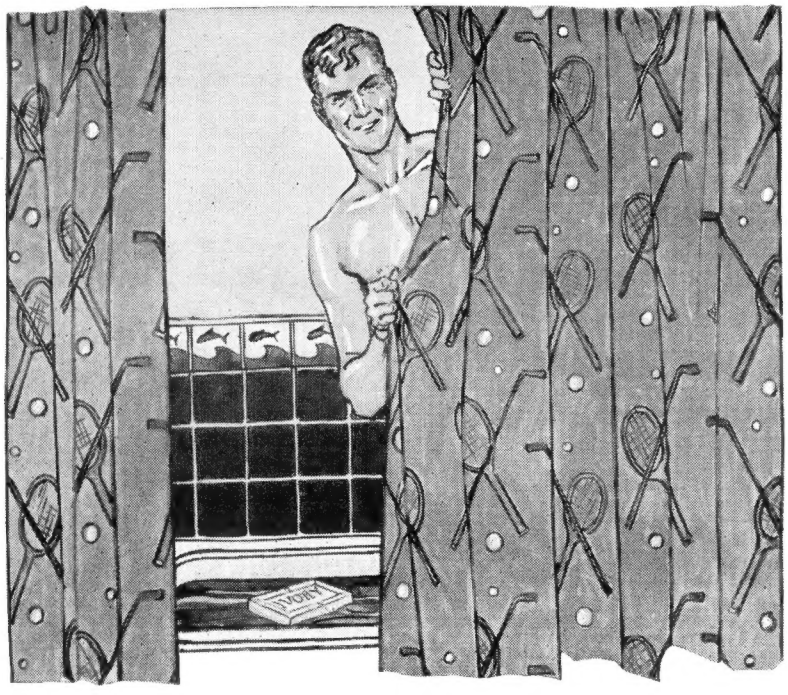

Pardon us, Mr. Jones!

Go right on splashing, Mr. Jones. Don't mind us.

We dropped in to congratulate you on finding a cure for the hot weather grumps. Don't apologize for them. They descend upon us all when summer is running in high gear. Perspiring employers bark at their secretaries . . . husbands blame wives for the humidity . . . kind fathers treat loving children with moist and clammy ferocity!

As for you, Mr. Jones, we'd never dream that you had ever sworn at the cat. You look as cool as a sprig of mint, if you don't mind the personal remark!

Our questionnaire department reports that you attribute this wonderful change to the soothing influence of your daily Ivory baths.

Yes, the market may sag, but Ivory always stays *up*. At merely a handshake it gives extra dividends with snowbanks of cooling foam. You'd never be the optimist you are today, Mr. Jones, if you had put your trust in a down-hearted cake of slippery sinker soap!

We must be getting along, Mr. Jones. You haven't a thing on us. For over fifty years, we've been prescribing Ivory baths, and we enjoy taking our own medicine!

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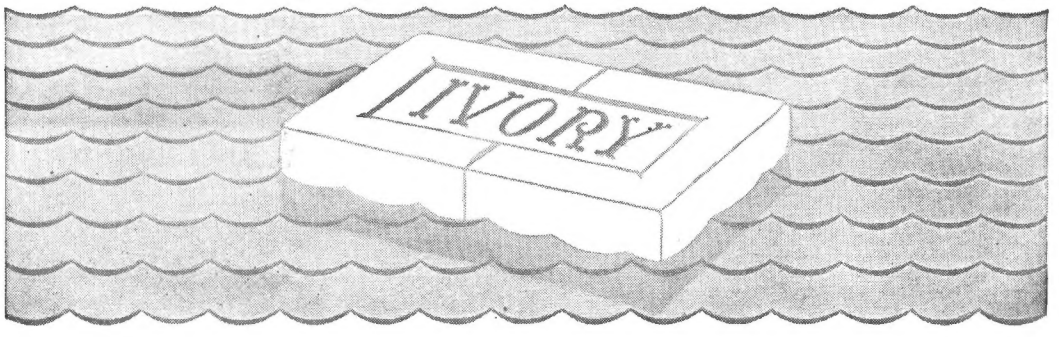

Adventure
(Registered U. S. Patent Office)

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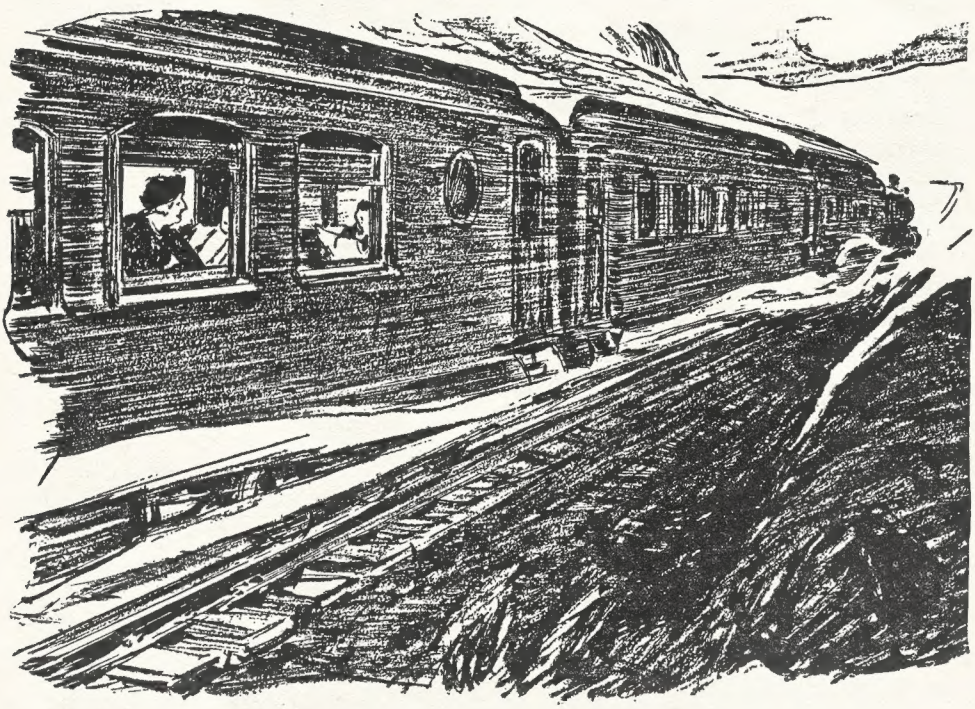
MILE A MINUTE



"ALL ABOARD!" cried Conductor Connolly as he stood beside an open vestibule of the *Bullet*, crack, all-steel, all-Pullman Texas to St. Louis flyer. The "all aboard" cry was pure habit, since no one was getting on or off here at this grimy division point of Newburg.

In fact only interstate travelers, mostly boarding at Fort Worth, Dallas or Tulsa and bound for St. Louis, patronized the extra fare, time fighting *Bullet*. The *Bullet's* only stops were division points. Just now Connolly could see a hostler grinding toward the roundhouse with the tired engine which had pulled them a hundred and eighteen miles from Springfield. Already was hooked on, puffing, straining, throbbing under the leash of its throttle, the fresh locomotive which was to haul them on to St. Louis.

A messenger boy came running down the platform. He delivered a Western Union message to Conductor Connolly just as Connolly waved a highball to the engineer. Instantly the train began to move. Connolly mounted the steps, dropped the hinged section of the vestibule platform and then closed the door.

The telegram, he noted, was addressed as follows:

LUTHER JORDAN
CARE CONDUCTOR NO. 2
NEWBURG, MO.

Being the skipper of a de luxe train, Connolly was used to relaying telegrams to

MURDER

A Mystery Novelette

By

ALLAN VAUGHAN ELSTON

passengers. Men of affairs rode the rails with Connolly. He knew Luther Jordan by sight and reputation and knew that he was on this train. In fact he recalled having seen Jordan disembark at Springfield three hours ago and dash into the depot telegraph office while the train was changing engines. Very likely, thought Connolly, this telegram was an answer to one dispatched by Jordan at Springfield.

Connolly stepped forward into the car ahead of him, which was the lead Pullman. He lingered in the first Pullman only long enough to compare watches with Raegan, the brakeman, who was lounging in the Pullman's washroom.

Raegan was burly, rawboned, lantern jawed and about forty years old. He was a tough scrapper with a long reach and with hands like hams. Perhaps that was why he had been teamed with Connolly, who, though competent and conscientious, was not physically aggressive. Connolly was sixty-three, gray haired, of mild temper and slight stature.

"Clear track in?" inquired Raegan gruffly.

"Clean and clear," agreed Connolly.

Connolly then moved toward the rear of the train. In the second Pullman he nodded to the Pullman conductor, a soft and three chinned individual by the name of Doanes.

Moving on back to the third Pullman, he was accosted by a sprucely dressed and extremely sophisticated passenger named Archie Griers. Connolly knew Griers to be a newspaper man, a by-liner and a runner of Sunday supplement feature stories for one of the big St. Louis dailies.

"How late are we?" inquired Griers.

"Thirty-seven minutes," Connolly frowned. "But Mike McNamara's pull-

ing us, so we got a chance to make it up. Mike's a time fighting fool."

Griers whistled.

"Gee! The *Bullet's* got a forty-six mile an hour schedule without making up a minute! To gain thirty-seven minutes on a single division we'll have to crowd sixty an hour."

Connolly shrugged.

"Leave it to Mike. Of course he'll have to drag through Rolla at only twenty-five, and he can't beat thirty up the Cuba hill. But most of the way he'll make sixty look sick."

The clicking of fish plates already indicated terrific speed, though they were scarcely out of the Newburg yard limit. Connolly went on back through the train.

He came to the diner, where many passengers were eating luncheon. On one side of an aisle were tables for four, on the other side were tables for two. Silverware and immaculate linens gleamed luxuriously. White coated negroes, under the command of a sleek and obsequious steward, moved softly up and down the aisle.

Connolly passed on to the only vehicular unit back of the diner, which was the club-observation car. It was a coach whose forward half was furnished with effects similar to those of a club room. Just now this forward section of the car was deserted.

Midway of the car was a washroom with a narrow aisle to one side of it; this narrow aisle gave into the observation lounge, or parlor of the train.

There Connolly found four men seated in overstuffed chairs, casually conversing. One of the four was Luther Jordan of St. Louis.

Jordan was alert, clean cut and about forty-five years old. He had wavy brown hair, intelligent brown eyes and wore a meticulously trimmed Van Dyke beard. Successful professional man was written all over him. He was, in fact, a St. Louis architect returning from the inspection of a Tulsa skyscraper of his own design.

Connolly handed him the telegram received at Newburg.

"Your pardon, gentlemen." Luther Jordan turned away from the three men with whom he had been conversing, tore the envelop from his message and read it.

Connolly did not know the other three men. They were well dressed and seemed to be prosperous urbanites. Quite likely they were men of means, since they were riding an extra fare train.

CONNOLLY moved on back a few steps to unlock the rear door, which admitted out upon the exterior observation platform. He had locked this rear door before the Newburg stop, because once a stowaway had boarded him by sneaking in through the observation. Since then Connolly had made a practice of locking his rear door at division point stops. He tended to the matter personally, not relegating it to a porter.

Now, as his hand delved into his pocket for the key, Connolly looked through the glass at the receding track and estimated that McNamara must already be doing a good fifty. Then it occurred to Connolly that there really wasn't much use unlocking this door; the weather, though clear, was extremely raw; probably no observer would want to sit outside.

"Conductor."

Connolly turned in response to the voice of Jordan. Jordan was approaching him, holding the telegram. On Jordan's face was an expression of mingled uncertainty and apprehension.

This puzzled Connolly, for Jordan had seemed to him a man of decision. Nor had he sized the man up as timorous. He inquired—

"What may I do for you?"

Jordan paused before Connolly. His lips opened to speak, then closed tightly. He glanced back over his shoulder at the three men who were still conversing in a group at the far end of the parlor. His eyes turned to rest on Connolly. He looked Connolly over from head to foot, and back again, as though appraising both the person and personality of the conductor.

"Anything wrong?" inquired Connolly sharply.

Jordan put the telegram back into its torn envelop, placed the envelop in his wallet and put all in the inside pocket of his coat. Connolly even noticed that the man buttoned his coat. Then Jordan surprised him by inquiring abruptly—

"How far is it to Moselle?"

"About sixty-eight miles," Connolly told him.

"When will we get there?"

"At our present speed we shall go *through* Moselle at about 2:35," informed Connolly, "but we do not stop. Our next and only stop is St. Louis, which is forty-six miles beyond Moselle. Has something come up which makes you want to get off at Moselle?"

"No, but—" Jordan hesitated, his indecision puzzling Connolly more than ever. "Oh, never mind. Thank you, Conductor."

Whereupon Jordan turned and began to pace the parlor, hands clasped behind him, eyes staring down at the floor.

Just then the dining car steward appeared in the narrow aisle between clubroom and observation, calling out—

"Last call for luncheon, gentlemen."

"That means me," said one of the three seated men. He arose and went forward toward the diner.

It was about a minute later that another of the three seated men said—

"I could stand a bite myself." He likewise went forward.

And after another full minute had elapsed, although the interval did not seem important at the time, the third of the three seated men went forward toward the diner.

This while Connolly was waiting to see if Jordan, who was pacing the floor, was going to confide his worry. Jordan had produced a long black cigar, placed it between his lips and was now fumbling with his patent lighter. The lighter would not work. Connolly struck a match, stepped up and held it to Jordan's cigar.

"Thank you."

The acknowledgment was so terse that Connolly took it for a dismissal. He went forward. The incident had caused him to forget all about unlocking the observation platform door.

He passed through the aislet between parlor and clubroom. In doing so he did not turn his head and look into the intervening washroom. However he heard a faint splash of water. Thus he was subconsciously aware that one of three men preceding him had stopped in there to wash for luncheon.

Connolly went on up through the diner, seeking Pullman Conductor Doanes. He found Doanes in the smoking compartment of the third Pullman and expended a few minutes comparing ticket lists with Doanes. Connolly then washed for luncheon. He always ate in the diner, though it was his habit to wait until the rush of passenger patronage was over.

Arriving in the diner, he found Archie Griers lunching at a two-chair table.

"Join me, Connolly?" invited Griers.

Connolly took the seat opposite Griers. Looking out, he saw that the train had slowed to about twenty-five miles an hour as they were passing through the sizable town of Rolla.

The Rolla depot came opposite Connolly's window. As he passed it, Connolly saw a boy pick up from the depot platform what appeared to be the frame of a tennis racket. Actually it was a looped wicker, or hoop equipped with a handle, a contraption which depot agents use to hand a train order to a brakeman who stands on the step of a moving train.

The fact that the boy was retrieving one of these things told Connolly that it had just been used. Obviously the Rolla agent had signaled with his board that he had a communication for No. 2. Brakeman Raegan, riding the front Pullman and on the lookout for such signals, had stood on the step of an open vestibule with arm outstretched. Raegan, having plucked the message from the hoop's clip, had of course tossed the hoop back on the platform.

THE *BULLET* now gained speed. A waiter took Connolly's order. Just then Connolly caught a phrase or two from three men who were dining across the aisle. From the corner of his eye he noted that they were the same trio who had recently been in the parlor car with Jordan.

"He's pretty well up in his profession, isn't he?" one of them was saying.

"Yes," answered another. "Got jobs under way all over the country. The name, I think, is Jordan."

"Bright chap," commented the third man. "But something seemed to be disturbing him. Deucedly preoccupied, if you know what I mean."

At that moment Connolly, through the window, caught the flash of Mile Post 105. Then he saw Brakeman Raegan striding toward him from the front of the diner. In Raegan's hand was the message which he had hooked on the run at Rolla.

Connolly took the message. He saw instantly that it was not a train order. Neither had the message come through Western Union. It was in a sealed envelop, a railroad envelop, the regular traingram form.

Raegan stood by while Connolly opened the message. As Connolly read, his eyes widened. He whistled under his breath.

CONNOLLY
CONDUCTOR NO. 2
ROLLA, MO.:

SLAYER OF HOWARD T. GILROY IS ON YOUR TRAIN. HE WAS RECOGNIZED AT SPRINGFIELD BY PASSENGER LUTHER JORDAN. JORDAN WAS THE ONLY EYE WITNESS TO THE GILROY KILLING SEVEN WEEKS AGO IN ST. LOUIS. FROM SPRINGFIELD JORDAN WIRED ST. LOUIS POLICE WHO ANSWERED HIM AT NEWBURG. JORDAN'S TELEGRAM DID NOT MENTION WANTED MAN'S NAME.

YOU WILL STOP TRAIN AT MOSELLE, WHERE ARRANGEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE FOR FRANKLYN COUNTY OFFICERS TO BOARD YOU. THEY WILL EMBARK AT REAR END, MEETING JORDAN QUIETLY IN PARLOR CAR IN ORDER NOT TO ALARM PASSENGERS. UPON IDENTIFICATION BY JORDAN, OFFICERS WILL ARREST CRIMINAL AND BRING HIM ON INTO ST. LOUIS. DO NOT ALLOW LATTER TO KNOW HE IS UNDER SURVEILLANCE UNTIL OFFICERS BOARD YOU AT MOSELLE.

—JOHN J. GAY, CHIEF DISPATCHER

The purport of this message fairly stunned Connolly. He looked up and saw that Brakeman Raegan, who had read the message over his shoulder, was no less shocked.

And Archie Griers, the St. Louis newspaperman who was seated opposite Connolly, could tell by the expressions of both trainmen that some worthwhile news was in the air. He leaned forward and caught one word of the message—Gilroy.

"Does that," inquired Griers keenly, "refer to Howard T. Gilroy, the big politician and gambler who was shot seven weeks ago?"

Connolly vaguely recalled the unsolved Gilroy killing, though its details escaped him. But here was Griers who, being a newspaperman, would know all about it. He handed the message to Griers.

Griers' eyes swept over it.

"Wow!" he exclaimed excitedly. "Yes, I remember that a man named Jordan was an eye witness—the only eye witness, to the shooting."

"Give me the high points of it quickly and quietly," invited Connolly.

"An unknown assassin shot Gilroy in Gilroy's office on the eighth floor of a downtown office building," recounted Griers. "The assassin climbed through an open window to a fire escape, down which he descended to the alley. An architect named Jordan saw both the actual shooting and the escape. Jordan was at the window of his own office on the eighth floor of a building across the alley.

"Jordan phoned the police, describing the assassin, but the latter was not caught. Now, after seven weeks, Jordan has evidently come face to face with him on this train. Wow! Can you beat it?"

"A croaker ridin' with us, huh?"

growled Brakeman Raegan. "Lead me to him. I'll—"

"Jordan will have to do the leading," cut in Connolly.

"But why," asked Griers, "didn't Jordan inform you at first hand, and point out the man, instead of wiring the St. Louis police?"

That angle puzzled Connolly. He was pondering it when Griers took a shot at answering his own question.

"No doubt Jordan knows the man is not planning to get off, in fact can not get off, this side of St. Louis. The Gilroy crime was in St. Louis and thus it is the St. Louis police who are most competent and eligible to arrest the murderer. And maybe Jordan is afraid that you, Connolly, might brace the man tactlessly and perhaps start a needless shooting—possibly a panic on the train. So he decides to let the murderer ride unsuspectingly into the arms of a homicide squad at the St. Louis Union Station."

"But the St. Louis police," amended Connolly, "after conferring with my dispatcher, decide to play safe. They arrange for county officers to board us at Moselle. The St. Louis police explain this plan by Western Union wire to Jordan, who gets it at Newburg, while the dispatcher explains to me by railroad wire, reaching me nine miles farther on at Rolla. Well, let's go back and ask Jordan to put a name to the murderer."

"Lead me to him!" growled the big brakeman, Raegan. Always as hard as nails and as tough as steel, right now there was an especial belligerence to the thrust of his jaw.

It wouldn't be a bad idea, thought Connolly, to have Griers come along, for as a reporter Griers had often rubbed shoulders with crime and criminals. Another thought struck Connolly. Maybe the wanted man was one of the three across the aisle!

The only thing to suggest it was that they had formed a group with Jordan before luncheon. Connolly glanced covertly across at the trio. Certainly no one of them looked like a murderer. He realized that there must be at least a score of adult males on the train equally eligible for suspicion.

Nevertheless an inner voice whispered to Connolly that a watch ought to be kept over the three across the aisle. He arose and spoke in a low tone to Raegan.

"Sit down, Raegan. When my luncheon comes, eat it. Griers and I will go back to the parlor car and have a talk with Jordan. In the meantime keep an eye on the three fellows just across."

"Gotcha," agreed Raegan, easing his bulk into Connolly's chair.

CONNOLLY moved briskly rearward, followed by Griers. The *Bullet* was now rocking along at high speed and Griers, who had not the train legs of Connolly, lurched and bumped awkwardly into the sleek and obsequious steward who was stationed at the end of the aisle. A mulatto waiter tittered. Griers begged the steward's pardon, then followed in the wake of Connolly.

They rounded the diner's kitchen and opened the rear door of the car. Through that they passed out upon a sealed vestibule, and from there they passed on into the clubroom of the club-observation. The clubroom was deserted.

By now a vague premonition of disaster had assailed Connolly. He failed to explain or analyze it. He hastened his pace, passed around the U of the narrow aisle between the exterior wall of the car and the washroom at its center, coming thus to the observation lounge at its rear.

He stopped short, gasped, stared. He heard a cry from Griers who was pressing close behind him. Both men gazed in utter stupefaction at what lay prone on the parlor car floor—the body of Luther Jordan.

On either side the oaken woodlands lurched upward and downward, in crazy tilts, as the *Bullet* sped onward at sixty miles an hour. The fish plates clicked a swift tempo of music which, to Connolly, seemed like a shrill discord ringing within his own brain. Then, for an

instant, came a hoarser sound. For that same instant a window darkened. Connolly knew that both sound and shadow were caused by the close proximity of the St. James depot as they rushed past it.

His mind cleared. From force of habit he looked at his watch and saw that, here at St. James, they were only thirty-three minutes late. Which meant that Engineer McNamara had already made up four minutes. Connolly now heard the screech of McNamara's whistle as he roared onward, racing for the Cuba hill.

The train lurched around a curve. As it did so the corpse on the parlor car floor moved, actually slid a few inches nearer Connolly. It was uncanny, almost as though Jordan might be still alive.

But he was dead, stone dead. Connolly, stooping, could now see the face. There was a bullet hole almost squarely between the eyes. It was certain that the violence had occurred within the last forty minutes. Forty minutes ago, or less, Connolly himself had left Jordan alive in this parlor. His last act had been to hold a match to Jordan's cigar.

That same cigar now lay on the carpet beside the corpse. Connolly saw that not so much as a quarter of an inch had been smoked from its end. It was therefore reasonable to assume that Jordan had been shot only a few minutes after he, Connolly, had gone forward from the rear car.

Connolly recalled that he had not gone forward until three other men had done so, separately and at intervals of about a minute. It then flashed to Connolly that he himself, on passing the parlor car washroom, had heard the splash from a basin tap. Which meant that one of the three men had stopped there en route to the diner.

As for the rear door, it was locked. It had been locked since Newburg. Not that it made any difference, since the exterior platform had been deserted and was still deserted. Nevertheless, Connolly walked down the parlor and tried the door. It was locked.

"But we heard no shot?" protested Griers.

"You can't hear a pistol shot fired in one closed coach from the next coach, at this speed," reminded Connolly. "Too many competing sounds. Or if you heard the shot, you would take it for slack being jerked tight at a coupling."

"The big point," offered Griers in a voice none too steady, "is that we've got a murderer loose on the train."

Connolly was equally certain that the same murderous hand must have felled Gilroy in St. Louis. Evidentally the killer, having become aware of Jordan's plan to identify him, had effaced Jordan to avoid capture.

"I presume you'll signal for a stop at the next town," suggested Griers.

"Why stop at the next town?"

"Isn't there a law decreeing that the corpse of a murder victim can't be removed from the county in which the murder occurred, without authority from that county's officers?"

Connolly was thinking swiftly. His reply, finally, was uttered in a tone of doggedness to Griers.

"Counties mean nothing to a railroad man. We run our trains on the orders of a dispatcher and my dispatcher has already ordered me to highball for Moselle. As for counties, right while we're talking we're crossing from Phelps into Crawford. The first town in Crawford is Knobview; it's only a wide place in the road. If we stopped there the murderer would jump out a window and be gone. But at Moselle, officers have already been lined up to receive him. In the meantime the speed of the train is as good as a lock and key."

"How far to Moselle?"

"Fifty-three miles. And forty-six more to St. Louis."

"I get you," agreed Griers. "With a county posse lined up at Moselle and with the city police lined up at St. Louis, our best plan is to go on with both the corpse and the murderer. Here are two other justifications: Jordan is a St. Louisan and we're taking his body appropriately to-

ward home. Also, although this murder was committed in an upstate county, the Gilroy murder was committed in St. Louis, making it O. K. to speed toward the jurisdiction of the St. Louis police."

Connolly squared his thin shoulders; his jaw set with grim resolution.

"Right now we're in *my* jurisdiction," he told Griers. "One of my duties is to protect the comfort of innocent passengers. I don't want them annoyed, baited and manhandled by those county officers who'll board us at Moselle, and later by the St. Louis police."

"Which means?" prompted Griers.

"Which means," stated Connolly, "that I'm going to uncover the killer before we reach Moselle. Don't touch the body, Griers, but help me look for clues."

THEIR first finding was that the bullet had passed entirely through Jordan's head. Whereupon Griers began searching for the bullet which, since all the window panes were intact and shut, could not have passed out into space.

In less than a minute Griers picked up a mushroomed bullet. Nearly spent, it had struck a steel wall of the car and thence dropped to the carpet.

"All bullets look alike to me," admitted Connolly.

"They don't to me," asserted Griers. He balanced this one in his palm. "It's too light," he observed, "for a .45. Ditto for a .41. At the very most it can only be a .38. More likely it's a .32. Yes, I'd almost bet on a .32."

"We'll assume a .32 or a .38 then," agreed Connolly, putting the bullet in his pocket. "Next, I want the exact wording of the telegram which Jordan received at Newburg."

"It's bound to bear on the case," conceded Griers.

Connolly recalled having seen Jordan put the message into his bill fold, then put the bill fold in the inside breast pocket of his coat, and button the coat.

He now observed that the coat was unbuttoned. Jordan himself might have unbuttoned it before being shot, or possibly the murderer had done so in order to search the inside pocket.

Gingerly Connolly lifted the edge of the coat and exposed the inside pocket. He felt there and drew forth a bill fold. By the initials it was Jordan's. It contained $135 in currency.

But it did not contain any telegram.

"Yet I saw him put it there with my own eyes," protested Connolly. "Yes, and three other men saw him put it there. We were the only four men on the train who knew Jordan had received the message."

It was a startling clue. Why had the telegram, and nothing else, been taken from the victim?

Connolly came to a quick decision.

"Griers," he instructed, "wait here. Or rather remain in the clubroom while I round up some witnesses."

They went forward to the clubroom end of the car. There Griers waited. Connolly passed on to the diner. In the diner he held a brief, whispered conference with Brakeman Raegan. Then he turned sternly to three men who were dining directly across the aisle.

"I do not wish to alarm other passengers," he told them, "but you three will have to be questioned. You were last with Luther Jordan in the parlor car. He lies there now, shot dead. The only thing the assailant took from him was a telegram received by Jordan at the last stop. Since you three were the only ones who saw him receive it, then—"

"What the devil do you mean, sir?" interrupted one of the seated men indignantly. "I'll—"

"You'll keep quiet," cut in Connolly sharply. Slight and gray haired oldster though he was, there was no man alive who could bully him on his own train. From the corner of his eye he saw that the sleek steward was staring pop eyed at the group. Fortunately most of the diners had finished eating and gone forward to the Pullmans. "You'll keep quiet, all three of you, and proceed back to the club car to be questioned. It's murder."

Brakeman Raegan had arisen and was towering over the group. It was a comfort to Connolly to know that Raegan always carried a .45 automatic and that he was eminently competent to enforce any orders which his conductor saw fit to give. Raegan nŏw glared fiercely at the trio. One by one they arose. They filed back toward the rear end, followed first by Raegan, then by Connolly.

"Ees zumtheeng wrong, sir?" said the steward to Connolly.

"There is," snapped Connolly. "A passenger has been shot dead in the club-ob. It's bound to get out, but tell your niggers not to chatter about it. And don't let any more customers enter the diner, or pass back to the club-ob. Find Pullman Conductor Doanes and have him report to me immediately."

Connolly then passed on after Raegan and the three witnesses.

In the club car they joined Griers. From there the body and the parlor end of the coach could not be seen, due to the intervening washroom.

"Take a look, Raegan," said Connolly. "The rest of you be seated."

Raegan stepped into the narrow aisle which connected the two sections of the car, took a look, then returned grimly.

"Name him—then leave him to me," he growled to Connolly.

"I'm not able to name him yet," admitted Connolly. "Just now, Raegan, act as guard to see that no one enters or leaves this car except as I direct."

Raegan drew his pistol and sat down by the forward door.

The three tentative suspects had now reached varying degrees of agitation and indignation.

One of them gave the name of Franse and his occupation as that of a bond salesman traveling out of St. Louis. He was short, knob chinned, with a round face and with eyes slightly popped. He was not at all indignant at being quizzed. Rather he was eagerly curious. If he hadn't been stopped, he would have asked more questions than Connolly.

A SECOND witness was a big, bull voiced, heavy jowled fellow named Hoffling. His accent was German. He was, so he said, a resident of St. Louis, although his business interests were in the Oklahoma oil fields. He it was who had offered the outburst of indignation in the diner. He now became doubly indignant. Connolly thought that his eyes, which were small and sly, hardly matched his outspoken temper.

The third man, named Steeger, asserted that he had retired from business. His attitude was one of cynical aloofness. His face was long and narrow, and he smoked long cigarets in a longer holder. When Connolly asked him a question, he had a way of narrowing his lids before answering, and of then replying with some curt, nearly insolent monosyllable.

All three claimed never to have known Gilroy, although Franse and Hoffling admitted residency in St. Louis on the date of Gilroy's death. All three claimed not to have known each other, or Jordan, except by reputation, until a chance meeting today on this train. Steeger had boarded at Fort Worth, Franse at Dallas, Hoffling at Tulsa.

The *Bullet* was pounding on, though at only about thirty miles an hour now because they were climbing Cuba hill. Still, even at thirty an hour, the murderer could swing off only at the almost certain expense of a broken neck or leg. Connolly did not believe he would try it. He felt sure that the guilty man would sit pat, confident that he was but one of many passengers open to suspicion.

The plump bond salesman, Franse, asked eagerly:

"Well, Conductor, what we gonna do about it? Can I help? Why don't you frisk everybody for a gun? Why—"

"Why," interrupted Connolly, "was Jordan murdered so quickly after he received that telegram; and how did the murderer know he had received it—unless he is one of three men?"

"One of *four* men," corrected Hoffling

bluntly. "You, yourself, Conductor, handed the message to Jordan."

"So he did," chirped Franse. "And I believe the conductor was the last of us to leave the parlor. Steeger went forward first. He was followed by Hoffling. A minute later I went, leaving the conductor still with Jordan."

Just then Pullman Conductor Doanes appeared from forward. The soft and fattish Doanes was wellnigh in a buck ague of apprehension. There was a wild look in his eyes and he was mopping sweat from all three of his chins.

"Lord, Connolly!" he bleated. "They tell me there's been a shooting!"

Back of Doanes was the dining car steward. To him Connolly spoke first.

"Steward, just out of Newburg these three men went separately to luncheon. In what order did you seat them?" Connolly pointed in turn to Franse, to Steeger and to Hoffling.

The steward indicated Franse.

"I theenk, sir, I seat this gentleman first. Then this one. Then this one. They know each other, so I put them at the same table."

He indicated the three men in the opposite order from that in which they had withdrawn from the parlor.

"What of it?" boomed Hoffling. "For my own part, I went first to my stateroom, two Pullmans ahead, to wash up."

"I went to my own section," chimed in Franse.

"And I to mine," insisted Steeger.

The steward admitted that he could not recall the order in which they had traversed the diner en route to the Pullmans.

"The point is," observed Connolly, "that Steeger, although he left the parlor first, might have turned aside into the parlor car washroom. He might have been there when I, who was the last to leave Jordan, passed forward. Steeger could then have returned, shot Jordan, taken the telegram, chucked it out a window and—"

"The windows seemed to be closed and screened," inserted Steeger crisply.

That was true. And Connolly knew that train screens are not designed to be either removed or opened by other than trainmen. This, together with the fact that the rear door had been locked, gave Connolly an idea.

"Doanes," he directed, "go forward and have your porters search all cuspidors for torn scraps of yellow paper."

The Pullman conductor went forward to execute this errand.

Franse, Hoffling and Steeger, in order, denied having stepped aside into the parlor car washroom en route to luncheon. Yet Connolly, recalling that splash of water from a running tap, knew that one of them was lying. He was willing to wager that that same liar was the murderer of Jordan.

Only the rotund and pop eyed Franse took the quizzing in good spirit. The oil man, Hoffling, got surlier every minute. Steeger remained tight lipped and cynical.

THERE came a jarring rattle of wheels over frogs. The train was gaining speed, which told Connolly that it had reached the summit of the Cuba plateau. It was now only eighty-five miles down a long water grade to St. Louis. The Cuba depot whizzed by. Faster they went, and ever faster. They cracked over the frog points at the east end of the Cuba yard at fifty-five miles an hour. Which reminded Connolly that he now had only about forty-five minutes, if he was going to solve the murder before Moselle.

"Hello!" suddenly exclaimed Archie Griers. "This looks like a hot tip, Connolly." Griers was holding a pad of blank Western Union message forms to the light of a window. "I believe," he added, "that we can get at the exact wording of the message sent by Jordan from Springfield to the St. Louis police."

It developed that Griers had taken the pad from a rack on the club car wall, the pad having been kept there as a standard furnishing for the convenience of passengers. Griers' idea was to write a telegram to his own paper, covering the murder, and throw it off at the next station.

But on the top sheet of the pad he had noticed the indentations of a hard pencil. He realized that the sheet must have been the second sheet of the pad when Jordan had written his Springfield wire.

After a close scrutiny of the indentations Griers read aloud to Connolly:

"ABOARD ST L & SF NO. 2
SPRINGFIELD, MO.

CHIEF OF POLICE,
ST. LOUIS:

SLAYER OF HOWARD T. GILROY IS ABOARD THIS TRAIN. HE IS BOUND FOR ST. LOUIS AND DOES NOT KNOW I HAVE RECOGNIZED HIM. I SUGGEST YOU HAVE HOMICIDE SQUAD MEET US AT UNION STATION WHERE I WILL IDENTIFY WANTED MAN.

—LUTHER JORDAN."

Hoffling, after a tense silence, blurted: "Jordan was a fool. Why, instead of wiring the St. Louis police, didn't he simply pass the buck to the conductor? The conductor could have held the train right there in Springfield until he had called in the Springfield police."

Connolly was puzzled. It seemed very much as though Hoffling were right. Yet he recalled Jordan's reluctance to confide in him even after the answering telegram had reached the train at Newburg. What lay back of that reluctance?

Doanes returned and reported that his porters had failed to find any torn yellow scraps. Yet the words were hardly out of his mouth when the steward came rushing from the diner. In his hand he held a rectangle of crumpled yellow paper.

"I find this," he squealed to Connolly, "under the table where those gentlemans have eat luncheon." He pointed from Franse to Hoffling to Steeger.

The steward then turned and beckoned to a negro waiter who had followed him from the diner.

Connolly took the yellow scrap. He saw that it was the lower right hand quarter of a torn telegram. Evidently some one had torn the message twice, making four pieces of it, of which this was one. The segment read:

IS ARRANGING
ELLE, WHERE OFFICERS
WITH AID YOUR IDENTIFICA-
ND BRING THEM ON TO ST. LOUIS.
—P J BANNISTER, ACTING CHIEF POLICE

It was a vital clue, and Connolly led Griers and Raegan aside for a private discussion of it. They did not show it to Franse, Hoffling or Steeger.

"It's a lead pipe cinch," whispered Griers to the two trainmen, "that one of the three bumped both Gilroy and Jordan. Between Springfield and Newburg the man had need to write a telegram of his own, when, taking up the pad of blanks, he saw the indentations of the message last written. That warned him."

"Yes," agreed Connolly, "and later, at lunch time, the fellow decided to eliminate Jordan. He started up toward the diner, dodged into the washroom, let the rest of us pass, then stepped back into the parlor and shot Jordan. He took the telegram. What puzzles me is why he didn't tear it up more completely."

Connolly then turned to the three suspects. He demanded to know which had dropped the scrap under the diner table; he received vigorous denials from each.

"But this boy of mine," chirped the steward, "he can say which have drop the paper. Is it not so? Speak up, Cholly."

Cholly, the negro waiter, came to front and center.

"Boss," he addressed Connolly, "That last tam you-all come in the dinah you stop an' speak fust to the brakeman, then you tuhn an'say somethin' to these three gemman across the aisle. I was breshin' crumbs from the nex' table, suh. An' I seen one of these heah three gemman pull a scrap of papah from his pocket, wad it up an' throw it undah the table."

"Was it this particular scrap?" interrogated Connolly, holding up the torn quarter of telegram.

"Yes, suh. Aftah you-all had done gone out, I picked it up."

"Which of these three men did you see throw it away?"

Before the negro could answer, the

pop eyed bond salesman, Franse, burst forth in a panic of explanations.

"It was I," he cried. "But it doesn't mean a thing. I didn't take it from Jordan. I don't know anything about it."

BUT BRAKEMAN Raegan, at a nod from Connolly, had already grasped Franse by the arm. Franse squirmed, shouting vociferous denials. Amidst wild confusion Connolly sent both the steward and the waiter back to the diner, instructing them to close both intervening doors so that passengers ahead would not be disturbed.

"Turn me loose," shrieked Franse, struggling futilely in Raegan's grasp.

"Hold tight to him, Raegan," countered Connolly, "unless he can explain why he tore that telegram and threw it away."

"I didn't tear it," protested Franse. "Jordan himself tore it."

"Eh?" echoed Connolly. "How do you know Jordan tore it?"

"I lied," whined Franse, "when I claimed not to have stopped in the parlor car washroom on the way to the diner. I did stop there to wash my hands. While I was there, you, Conductor, went forward. A moment later Jordan himself passed, heading toward the diner!"

Here was a jolt for Connolly. Until now his entire view of the case had been built on the assumption that Jordan had never left the observation lounge.

"But just as I finished washing my hands," resumed Franse, "Jordan returned. I caught a flash of his profile as he passed the washroom door, presumably returning to his old seat in the parlor. A moment later I went forward.

"When I reached the vestibule between this car and the diner, I saw the torn fourth of a telegram on the vestibule floor. I guessed that Jordan must have come up here to throw the telegram off the train."

Connolly saw Raegan and Griers exchange glances of incredulity. Yet to Connolly himself Franse's statement seemed to be thus far logical. Left alone, Jordan's first thought might easily have been to get rid of the telegram. The rear door was locked. The windows had stubborn screens. The nearest easily opened outlet was an exterior door on the front vestibule of this coach.

These being modern coaches, the doors over the steps were in two halves, an upper half and a lower half, thus constructed so that a trainman could look ahead for signals by opening the upper half only. Therefore the upper half was a screenless window, in effect, which Jordan could conveniently have opened; from it he could have thrown the four scraps of a torn telegram. If Franse was telling the truth, three of these flew out and away, while the fourth had swirled back in, unnoticed by Jordan.

"I picked up the scrap out of pure curiosity," admitted Franse. "I was more curious than ever when I saw the signature, 'Acting Chief of Police'. I kept it, planning to pump Jordan about it after luncheon. But when you, Conductor, came by and said Jordan had been shot, I got scared and ditched it under the table."

Raegan snorted in contempt of the testimony. Yet Connolly was inclined to accept it. Franse, he felt sure, was nosey, inquisitive. It was well within his character to have picked up the scrap; it was natural for him to drop it like a hot coal when it developed into a clue to murder.

The *Bullet*, driven by Mike McNamara, was rocking along at terrific speed. Mile Post 78 flashed by, and Connolly knew they had passed Leasburg. It was still some thirty miles and thirty minutes to Moselle. Could he clinch guilt on Franse, Hoffling or Steeger in thirty minutes? Connolly wondered.

He conferred again with Raegan and Griers. It was decided to search the three suspects, and also their hand baggage, for any chance clue. The personal searchings were made by Raegan, in spite of protests roared profanely by Hoffling.

"You got no authority to—"

"I haven't?" snapped Connolly. "Well, I'm the only authority which exists on

this train. Also, I'm a Deputy United States marshal. Look it up, Hoffling. You'll find that all conductors of interstate trains are deputy U. S. marshals."

The search of persons yielded no weapon or clue. Raegan and Doanes then went ahead to the Pullmans to search hand baggage.

Connolly and Griers remained in the club car, where Connolly continued to question Franse, Hoffling and Steeger. He could not shake Franse's story. All the while Hoffling was boiling with threats to sue the railroad for defamation of character and personal humiliation. He raged back and forth like a lion. Steeger maintained his long poker face, blowing rings of insolent cigaret smoke.

The *Bullet* flashed by the depot of Bourbon. And just as it cracked over the easterly frogs at Bourbon, Doanes and Raegan returned from their search.

"We only found one suspicious clue," reported Raegan, "and it's on Hoffling." Raegan glared at Hoffling.

"If you found something on me, you planted it yourself," bawled Hoffling.

"The clue," Raegan reported to Connolly, "is that we did *not* find a .38 gun in Hoffling's grip, but we *did* find a box which lacked only five .38 cartridges of being full."

IT WAS a negative clue, but Connolly instantly caught its significance. Why should a man carry bullets in his grip unless he also carried a gun in which they could be used? Since travelers often carry pistols in baggage, a .38 in Hoffling's grip would have meant nothing at all. But to find bullets with no gun to match, right after a murder which would have impelled the murderer to throw his weapon off the train—that, to Connolly, was a real clue.

"Sure I got a .38 in my satchel," barked Hoffling. "The brakie didn't look close enough, that's all."

"I sifted everything," insisted Raegan.

"I checked him," offered Doanes.

"If it's not there, then some one swiped it to frame me," yelled Hoffling.

"By all precedent," came insolently from Steeger, "I must be guilty myself. You almost pinned it on Franse; now you've got Hoffling in a tight corner—which leaves only myself to qualify at the finish as Jordan's murderer."

Connolly ignored him. He left Raegan in charge of the group in the club car, then went forward into and through the diner.

He arrived before the door of Drawing Room A, two Pullmans ahead of the diner. He knew this drawing room to be Hoffling's accommodation.

Connolly did not enter the drawing room. Instead he accosted a delicate, silvery haired lady who was seated in Section 1. Her seat faced the door of Hoffling's stateroom.

"Madam," inquired Connolly, "have you observed the passenger who occupies the stateroom just in front of you?" He described Hoffling.

"I've seen him go in and out several times," admitted the old lady, surprised at the question.

Connolly then described Franse and Steeger.

"Have you seen either of those fellows enter that stateroom?" he inquired.

No, she had not.

"Did Hoffling himself come to his stateroom just after we left Newburg, something like an hour ago?"

"He did," was the prompt answer. "I had just returned from the diner, where I took an early luncheon. Just after I returned I saw the man come from the rear. He entered his stateroom, but came out almost immediately and returned toward the diner."

Hoffling might, considered Connolly, have merely gone in to wash for luncheon in the drawing room's private lavatory. On the other hand he might have entered for the sole purpose of getting his gun. He might have gone straight back to the parlor car, there killing Jordan. In the bustle of patrons moving through the diner the steward and waiters might well

fail to remember just how many times Hoffling had passed.

"Did he seem under a stress of excitement as he came out of his stateroom?" inquired Connolly.

"I observed nothing unusual," answered the old lady. "Why, is anything—?"

Suddenly she stopped, glanced out the window at the swiftly passing landscape and then, with an expression of mystification, turned back to Connolly.

"Wait. I saw nothing unusual *within* the car, but out there I saw—"

She astonished Connolly by pointing out-of-doors in the general direction of the posts at the right-of-way fence. The right-of-way was smooth, having been cleared of weeds by section gangs to diminish the fire hazard. As she pointed, the *Bullet* was speeding over the rails at fully sixty miles an hour.

Connolly heard the shriek of McNamara's whistle as they swept into Sullivan. They flashed through Sullivan and on.

And now the gray head of Conductor Connolly was inclined toward the grayer head of the old lady, his lips were parted and his eyes were widening in utter amazement as he listened to a testimony from the occupant of Section 1.

"What time was that?" he inquired tensely.

"It was a few minutes after we had passed through that pretty town with the wide paved street and—"

"A few minutes after we passed through Rolla, eh?" interrupted Connolly, knowing that no other town since Newburg could be so described. "Madam, what you have told me is of the gravest importance. Please say nothing about it to other passengers."

Connolly left her and hurried toward the rear of the train. As he passed through the final Pullman he commandeered a linen sheet from a porter. With this he hurried through the diner, crossed the last set of vestibules and burst into the club car. There he found the three suspects under the vigilance of Raegan, Griers and Doanes.

Connolly handed the linen sheet to Raegan.

"Use this to cover Jordan's body," he directed.

With the sheet, Raegan disappeared around the [illegible] of the narrow aisle between club room and parlor. The instant he was out of sight, Connolly spoke in a low voice to the other five men:

"Quick!—all of you! Get out on the vestibule."

He urged them forward and out upon the vestibule leading to the diner. Then he closed the solid steel door through which they had just passed. He took a key from his pocket and locked it. He left the key, a heavy brass one, crosswise in the lock, so that it could not be pushed out from the inside.

"Raegan's armed," he reminded Griers, Doanes, Franse, Steeger and Hoffling, "but I think this door's bullet proof. And in twenty minutes we take on officers at Moselle. In the meantime if Raegan jumps off the back end, he'll break his neck."

"Raegan?" gasped the pop eyed Franse, while the others, no less astounded, stared at Connolly. "Why should Raegan want to jump from the train?"

"Because," informed Connolly, "he shot Jordan. He's undoubtedly the man Jordan was intending to identify as the slayer of Gilroy. Now we got him alone; a brass key locks one end of his cell and speed locks the other."

CONNOLLY had no gun. He was an official of mild temperament who, in all his years of railroading, had never used one. It had been his habit to let the brakeman act as the armed sergeant of his train. It developed now that Pullman Conductor Doanes had a bright, shiny .32 which he claimed never to have used. He brought it from his route chest. Connolly gave it to Archie Griers and told Griers to keep it trained on the locked door behind which Raegan was captive.

They heard Raegan rattling the knob. They heard him shout, demanding to

know why they had locked him in. No one answered him. He ceased rattling the knob and he ceased shouting. Apparently the silence convinced him that some potent clue had tipped Connolly to his, Raegan's, guilt.

Connolly mopped his brow. This last turn in the mystery had set his heart to beating like a trip hammer.

"But everything dovetails now," he explained to the five men in the vestibule. "The one thing which didn't click, in spite of all our efforts to reconcile it, was why Jordan did not confide in the train crew instead of getting in touch by wire with the St. Louis police.

"The answer is that the only one of the trainmen who impressed Jordan as competent to arrest a murderer was Brakeman Raegan. And Raegan was the very man who needed arrest. Or maybe he thought I would refuse to credit an accusation against my own brakeman. And while I was bobbling the affair, Jordan thought Raegan might escape the train. So he dealt directly with the St. Louis police."

Archie Griers agreed that Jordan's reluctance to confide in the conductor was now fully explained.

"But I can't picture a railroad brakeman," protested Griers, "as the assailant of an ex-politician and gambler, like Gilroy, in a St. Louis office building."

"Neither can I," admitted Connolly.

Griers was roaching back his pompadour, deep in thought. Suddenly he plucked an idea from among the vast miscellany of facts which cluttered his reportorial mind.

"Wait a minute. Is Raegan a dope user? I mean cocaine, morphine or opium. Or has he ever been one?"

"No. I'm sure he never touched any stuff like that. Why?"

"I was trying to connect him with Gilroy. Gilroy, after being driven out of politics, ran a gambling house. Yet he lived on a scale which indicated, to some, greater prosperity than would logically accrue from his frequently raided joint. After his death that prosperity was explained. In his safe was found about ten thousand dollars worth of assorted dopes and narcotics, of which Gilroy was evidently a wholesale distributor."

And now it was Connolly's turn to pluck a fact from the store of them within his mind.

"It seems to me that the fellow's name was Gilman," he mused. "Still, it might have been Gilroy. This happened over a year ago. Say, Griers, was Gilroy hawk nosed and bald, with a cauliflower ear?"

"Yes," confirmed Griers eagerly. "Why?"

"Then, after all, we can trace a contact between Raegan and Gilroy. It happened on this very train. Remember that I, like all interstate conductors, am a deputy U. S. marshal. Once, more than a year ago, a Federal agent in St. Louis wired me, care of my train, to put one of my passengers under surveillance. The passenger occupied a stateroom in the through Mexico-to-St. Louis sleeper and I feel certain, from what you have just told me, that he was Gilroy. He was suspected of having a gripful of smuggled narcotics, which Federal agents planned to seize at the St. Louis union station. On the chance that Gilroy might pass the grip out the window to some confederate as we entered the suburbs, or that he might transfer it to some confederate already on the train, I was wired to keep him under surveillance. I turned the job over to Raegan. Raegan reported to me that the man was O.K. A search at the union station produced no narcotics, and earned Gilroy an apology from the police.

"But you see it, don't you?" exclaimed Griers excitedly. "It gives us all we want —a connection between your brakeman and Gilroy. Since dope was found in Gilroy's safe after his death, it's fair to assume that he was in the business of running it, as suspected a year ago by the police. I betcha here's what happened: Gilroy, in the stateroom, bribed Raegan not to give him away. More than that, he induced Raegan to take the grip of dope up to his own route chest, or in some

way smuggle it off the train at St. Louis. Raegan was then to deliver it at Gilroy's downtown office."

"But the shooting didn't happen till a year later," protested Franse.

"All we need is the connection," insisted Griers. "We've got it. We can well imagine that Raegan, equipped with his knowledge, would drop in on Gilroy between runs and demand more money. And that when Gilroy finally balked at the extortions there was a shooting."

Still, from beyond the locked door, came no further outcries or poundings from Raegan. The *Bullet* was clicking swiftly and sweetly down the Meramec grade. They flashed through Stanton.

"We've got two more stations between here and Moselle," announced Connolly. "Morrelton and St. Clair. Doanes, bring two sleeper pillows. Griers, write this message for me in duplicate, one copy for the agent at Morrelton, the other for the agent at St. Clair."

When Griers was ready to write, Connolly dictated:

"Agents, Morrelton and St. Clair:
It is vital that this message beat No. 2 to Moselle. Therefore promptly relay it by wire to Moselle as follows:
Agent, Moselle:
Brakeman Raegan is slayer of Gilroy. On this train Raegan has also shot to death passenger Luther Jordan. Raegan is armed and desperate but has been imprisoned in rear coach. He knows train will stop at Moselle. Therefore have county officers enlist all possible deputies and man right-of-way from west yard limit to depot, since Raegan may be expected to hop off rear end as train slows for Moselle.
—CONNOLLY, *Conductor No. 2.*"

GRIERS made two copies of the message. Each copy was tied to a Pullman pillow.

Connolly then opened the top half of an outside door so that he could put his head out and look ahead. He was not yet within sight of Morrelton.

"But you haven't told us what tipped you to Raegan's guilt," reminded Griers. Franse was equally curious.

"Cast your eyes out on the right-of-way," suggested Connolly.

The others crowded into the alcove of the vestibule, standing with Connolly on the hinged platform which had not been raised and which still concealed the steps. They looked out.

"All I can see is hard ground," protested Franse.

"You see something else," insisted Connolly. "Since you are looking at the ground on the east side of the train, on a clear afternoon, you see the shadow of the train."

Griers and Franse, though puzzled, admitted that they could see the shadow of the train. It was a moving shadow but constant in shape—a chain of long, low rectangles each of which was the shadow of a coach.

"An old lady up ahead," explained Connolly, "looked out her window about eighty minutes ago and saw that same shadow. It was a trifle squatter then than now because it was earlier in the afternoon."

"Well, what of it?" wondered Griers.

"This: She also saw, walking along the top of the shadow of her coach, the shadow of a man. The direction of the walking shadow was toward the rear of the train. A few minutes later she saw the walking shadow return, moving toward the engine. In silhouette, the roof walker wore a square billed trainman's cap, just like mine or Conductor Doanes'."

The group in the vestibule were staring at Connolly, like men stunned, too amazed for comment.

"But I'll wager," resumed Connolly, "that neither Doanes nor myself can walk down the roof of a passenger train moving at fifty or sixty miles an hour. Only one man aboard can do it: Raegan. Any active brakeman, schooled in his younger years as a freight shack, can and often does ride the roofs. On a moving coach roof, a brakeman is as sure footed as a goat. You see— But wait a minute, here we are at Morrelton."

The *Bullet* clattered over a succession of frog points. The music of speed altered a half tone lower as they shot alongside of a freight parked on a Morrelton siding.

Again came its normally high and sighing tenor as the train cleared the freight. They flashed by the depot.

As they did so, Connolly leaned out and tossed a pillow to which was tied a message. He saw it light at the feet of an operator who lounged at the station door. He saw the operator pick it up. Thus Connolly was fairly certain that the message would be relayed immediately, and would beat the train to Moselle.

"You see," he continued to Griers, "Raegan took a message on the run at Rolla. He was standing on the lowest step of the first Pullman. He probably thought it was some routine order from the dispatcher. Anyway he tore the envelop and read the message. It warned him. It told him about the trap at Moselle. So he took a blank railroad envelop, a regular traingram form just like the one he had mutilated, addressed it exactly as the other had been addressed, put the message in and sealed it.

"Already being in the front vestibule of the first Pullman, he was in a convenient spot from which to mount to the roof. He went briskly down the coach roofs, swung over the rear eave, let his feet rest on the railing of the observation platform and then hopped down to the platform. The rear door was locked but, being a trainman, he had a key. The message had suggested to him that Jordan would be waiting in the lounge and, sure enough, there he was. Raegan entered and—"

"But hold on," objected Griers. "Raegan's gun is a .45, whereas the murder weapon was not heavier than a .38."

"Maybe Jordan himself was armed," suggested Connolly. "We'll say he had a .32. Since we knew Raegan's gun to be a .45, the .32, by all logic, must have been Jordan's. He probably took it from his baggage at Springfield immediately after recognizing the slayer of Gilroy. Raegan, let us assume, planned to efface Jordan with a minimum of racket. Let's say that he tried to throttle Jordan, or seized him with the intention of hurling him from the rear of the train. Jordan, in the struggle, drew his own gun. Raegan took it away from him and shot him, not at any time drawing his own .45.

"We may then logically picture Raegan returning to the front of the train via the roofs, en route throwing away Jordan's .32 pistol. He was thus able to approach me in the diner from the front end, the direction of his approach giving him an airtight alibi. He reached me just as we passed Mile Post 105, which is about eight minutes this side of Rolla. I wondered vaguely at the time why Raegan had taken eight minutes to bring me the message."

"Gosh!" exclaimed Franse, loosening his collar as though he had just emerged from a suffocating atmosphere. "I'm sure glad the old lady saw the roof walking shadow. That's as near as I want to come to getting hanged."

"Same here," offered Hoffling sheepishly. The dramatic turn of events had quite knocked the surliness out of him.

"What about Hoffling's missing .38?" inquired Steeger.

"Let me guess that one," spoke up Pullman Conductor Doanes. "Raegan and I found two grips in Hoffling's stateroom. While I searched one, Raegan searched the other. He called my attention to a nearly full box of cartridges in his grip, but said he could find no gun. Neither could I. Raegan, we may be sure, had already slipped the gun in his pocket to throw suspicion on Hoffling."

"Which means," agreed Griers, "that he's got it now. Plus his own .45. Thus armed and with two murders cinched on him, he'll be hard to handle."

Again the music of speed changed from an even tenor to a dull bass of echos. Connolly observed that they were inside the yard limit of St. Clair. So he took the other pillow with its message. As they whizzed by at a mile a minute, he tossed it to the platform of the St. Clair depot. He looked back and saw the operator retrieve it. Though it was only six miles to Moselle, the chances were now doubled that the message would arrive before the train.

ALL THIS while not a sound of protest came from Raegan. Why wasn't he shouting his innocence, or pounding on the door, wondered Connolly. Had he been foolhardy enough, at this speed, to try dropping off the rear platform to some soft, sandy fill? More likely, thought Connolly, he was lying low with two guns, planning to shoot his way through the posse at Moselle.

Moselle? They must be within three miles of it. Connolly, standing in the vestibule's alcove and putting his head out the open upper half door, looked ahead.

"I want to make the stop as sudden as possible," he told Doanes and Griers. "I'll let Mac hit the west yard limit at full speed, then I'll signal him to stop. Griers, get your hand on that cord. Yes, that one. When I say stop, give it three pulls. That will mean 'Stop at next station'."

They sped on. Only two miles now to Moselle. Leaning far out he could see the buildings of the town. He called over his shoulder:

"Yes, the board's against us. Of course the dispatcher told the agent about our stopping to pick up officers."

"We don't need to signal the engineer, then," suggested Griers.

"No, but we will anyway, making doubly sure that he stops. Hello, I see armed men lined up along the right-of-way for half a mile this side of the depot. It means they got my warning about Raegan. And it means Raegan hasn't got a chance. Here we are."

They rushed by a sign reading "West Yard Limit, Moselle."

"Stop!" yelled Connolly to Griers.

Griers pulled the cord three times.

Connolly cocked an ear for the answering toot from McNamara.

The excitement of the past hour had sapped Connolly's strength; now he felt the reaction of relief. The ordeal was, he was sure, about over. He had carried the criminal swiftly to the ambushed arms of justice. Too bad about Jordan—but it might have been worse. Raegan, suddenly accused, might have unleashed two guns and inflicted more deaths than one. He would of course try dropping off the rear end as the train slowed, but—

But why hadn't McNamara tooted an acknowledgment of the stop signal?

A nausea stabbed Connolly to the very pit of his stomach. He went dizzy, turned cold all over. He became aware that the train was *not* slowing down.

Looking out, he saw a rifle armed deputy standing in the right-of-way. The deputy was gesticulating futilely at the speeding *Bullet.* They flashed by another deputy. And another, and another.

"God!" groaned Connolly. "Has Mac gone crazy? He's running a stop board. Why—?"

They flashed by the Moselle depot. They crashed on through and out of town, spurning it as though it were a plowed field. Again the oak woodlands, tilting crazily, closed in about the *Bullet;* again the discordant urban echoes and the blurring urban shadows were left behind; again came the shrill, even music of wheels which thrummed the fish plates at the rate of six for every second of time.

With his head far out the vestibule's upper half door, Connolly looked back. In the distance he saw a cheated crowd of deputies, milling on the depot platform. They were jerked from his sight as the train swung on to a curve to the right.

Because it was a curve to the right Connolly, being on the right side of the train, could see the engine when he looked ahead. In fact, when the train was fully on the curve, it was bent like a bow, Connolly's line of vision to the cabin being the taut string of the bow.

At a distance of a train length he saw Engineer McNamara at the throttle. To one side, in the cab, he caught a glimpse of the fireman's head and shoulders, as the fireman fed his fire box with coal. But towering over both engineer and fireman, a pistol pointed at either, stood Brakeman Raegan.

Raegan was in full command of the cab. Connolly's high stance as he stood

looking out the upper half door, across the chord of a curve, permitted him to see Raegan's shoulders and the back of his capped head over the tender. He needed to see no more. He knew that it was Raegan who had forced McNamara to run the board at Moselle.

It was, Connolly realized dizzily, the one and only way in which the brakeman could have defeated his capture at Moselle. If Raegan could walk the roofs once, he could do it again.

"Run that board!" Raegan must have ordered the enginemen, enforcing his will with two desperate guns.

Would McNamara fight? Not likely. His hands were engaged with the throttle, his eyes with the vista ahead. As for Fireman Findlay, Connolly knew that he was a fellow with an oversupply of muscle and an undersupply of courage.

Three minutes and they were three miles from Moselle.

Connolly, miserable and humiliated, reached up and pulled the emergency. He heard no whine of brakes. There was no jerk or slackening of speed. So he knew the worst. He knew that Raegan had turned an angle cock on the air signal hose.

That would put Connolly entirely out of communication with the engine, would destroy Connolly's ability to automatically clamp brakes on every wheel including the wheels of the engine, and would even put the ordinary signal cord, the one pulled three times by Griers, out of commission.

A modern train has, it should be understood, three lines of hose. A steam hose. An air hose. An air signal hose. All three go to the engine. The most forward set of hose couplings are just back of the tank, under the coach couplings between blind baggage and tank. Raegan, on his final trip over the roofs, must have passed by the blind baggage. Even at this dizzy speed a man of Raegan's skill could have stood on the coupling with one foot, lowered a long leg almost to the ties and kicked the lever of an angle cock. It would have been hazardous, but Raegan's entire program was hazardous.

"Griers," cried Connolly, "write a message outlining the situation. Say Raegan's in the cab forcing us to run wild, ignoring boards and blocks. I suppose he plans to choose his own stop—a place where he can most safely quit the train."

"I getcha," yelled Griers. "and you can bet he won't quit us at any hick town, or in open country where he'd have to run across fields and pastures. He may pick the next bridge over the Meramec."

"The safest place he could quit us," offered Connolly, "would be in the factory suburbs of St. Louis. There he'd have a confusion of buildings, box cars, street cars, with pavement under his feet. Write that message, Griers, outlining the situation to the dispatcher. Sign my name to it and toss it off at Robertsv—"

Too late. Even as he spoke the *Bullet* crashed through Robertsville.

Connolly leaned out and looked back. He saw that they had again run a board. On a parallel siding he saw No. 9, the *Meteor*, itself a crack train but outranked by, and now in the hole for, the *Bullet*.

OLD as he was, Connolly felt the blinding tears rush to his eyes. In all his career he had never been so flouted, so basely humiliated as now. He yelled at Griers:

"All right, toss a message off at Catawissa. Throw a follow-up off at every station we pass. Tell the dispatcher I'm doing my damnedest to stop the train."

Connolly then rushed forward through the diner and sleepers. As he passed up the aisles he saw that most of the passengers had not sensed that anything was wrong. True they had not stopped at Moselle—but according to the time table they were not supposed to. True they were crashing along at a frightful speed, but speed was why people paid extra fare to ride the *Bullet*.

Connolly hurried on toward the head end. The *Bullet*, in common with most

modern all-sleeper limiteds, did not carry an express car. It carried, sandwiched in between the first sleeper and the tender, one combination baggage and mail coach, the baggage end being nearest the sleepers.

Connolly pounded on the rear door of this combination coach. He was admitted by the two baggagemen in command of the car. Quickly he explained the situation.

They hurled questions at him. It was the first they had heard about the mutiny of Raegan. Then Connolly wasted another five minutes arguing with them. He wanted one of the baggagemen, both of whom were younger than himself, to take a gun, climb from the blind baggage to the tender and from there attack Raegan.

"Who? Me? Climb over that coal at sixty an hour?" expostulated one baggageman. "Not on your life! Listen, Connolly. If Raegan invades my car I'll take a contract to shoot him. But not anywhere else. See?"

Connolly turned imploringly to the other baggagemen.

The man shook his head.

"Me—I haven't lost any brakeman," he told Connolly.

Connolly pleaded with them. Every minute they were a mile closer to St. Louis. Connolly knew that already they must have crashed Pacific, which meant that they must have run another board. He knew too that they must have crashed over the almost sacred Missouri-Pacific crossing.

But he also knew that the dispatcher would understand by now that the train was running wild under the guns of a mad murderer, and that the dispatcher would therefore see to it that every towerman gave a clear track to the *Bullet.* He would see that the deadly jaws of no automatic derailer lay open in the path of its flight. Board blocks might be dropped in command to halt, but further than that the dispatcher would not dare defy the madness of Raegan. To derail Raegan meant to derail a hundred innocent passengers of the train.

The single consolation for Connolly was that they were now done with single track. The line was double tracked for the last thirty-four miles, Pacific to St. Louis; thus the peril of a wreck was now reduced.

"There's not a thing doing, Connolly," was the only answer he could get after extended pleading with the baggagemen.

"Lend me a gun and I'll do it myself," cried the sixty-three year old conductor.

He was dizzy, sick, totally incompetent to conduct a duel with Raegan. Yet he felt that if Raegan defied him all the way into St. Louis he, Connolly, would never live to hear a call boy shout his name—even to skipper a freight.

He looked out and caught a flash of the Allenton depot. Every minute was another mile. Desperate, without waiting for a reply, Connolly snatched a pistol from one of the baggagemen. He bawled for them to clear a path through the parcel post bags which were stacked at the front of the car.

They did, but it took time. Although the rules insist that the aisle leading toward the public coaches be kept reasonably clear, there is no such rule governing the passage and door which leads only to the tender. Thus the area was crammed with bags and it took the three men eleven minutes to reach the blind baggage door.

At the door Connolly, who was not a profane man, cursed ragingly. He found the keyhole full of waste. Raegan had tamped a pinch of waste into the keyhole from the outside, en route to the engine. It took another precious five minutes—and nearly five miles—for Connolly to pick the stringy stuff out.

Finally the door was opened. Connolly stepped out upon a narrow, swaying platform. The rear wall of the tender screened him from the cab. All the while both baggagemen were urging him not to attempt battle with Raegan.

Connolly turned a deaf ear. He was weak, but he did not realize how weak. His heart was racing, but he did not realize how swiftly. With one hand he

gripped the gun. With the other he caught a rung of the narrow and precarious ladder on the rear of the tender.

Climbing one step, Connolly raised his head and shoulders above the level of the tender's top. He saw a rocking universe of smoke and coal and steel. Thirty feet away he could see the back of Raegan's cap. Raegan had two guns and was commanding the cab. McNamara was engaged at the throttle, eyes ahead. Fireman Findlay was shoveling coal. The only face Connolly could see was Findlay's, and he could see that Findlay was frightened half out of his wits.

The tender was swaying. Connolly tried to get a knee on it. Just then Raegan turned and saw him. Raegan must have been expecting an attack from the blind baggage. He fired. The bullet smashed into coal, and a chip hit Connolly in the eye. He jerked nervously, as the pain stung him, and grabbed the edge of the tender's top with both hands. This caused him to drop the gun. The gun fell irretrievably under the train.

Just then the *Bullet* hit a six degree curve. It was a curve that no engineer would hit voluntarily at more than forty-five miles an hour, but McNamara, with a gun at his spine, hit it at fifty. The lurch dislodged Connolly.

He fell. He would have followed the pistol down under the wheels but for the two baggagemen. They caught him as he fell, dragging him back into their car. One of them closed the door, locked it.

Connolly raved at them. He wanted to get out on the blind baggage again, to have a try at reaching down to turn back the angle cock of the air signal hose.

"Suicide!" cried both baggagemen.

And no doubt it would have been for Connolly. Because of the pain in his injured eye he could hardly see. Although Raegan had turned the angle cock by letting a foot down to within eight inches of the ties, and kicking, it was quite likely that no mere kick would turn the cock back. Often one had to raise the lever before it would turn. In any case Raegan was a long legged brakeman, agile on speeding trains far beyond the agility of an oldster like Connolly.

But it took still other arguments to prevent Connolly from trying it. One was that they were now so nearly into St. Louis that Raegan would soon have to stop of his own accord. Another was that turning the angle cock would gain nothing except to give Connolly control of the air brakes. And he was far from certain whether the hazards of a sudden and dominant use of the brakes, at this speed and with the increasing frequency of the frog points here in the industrial suburbs, would not be equal to the hazard of letting Raegan choose his own stop.

Therefore Connolly, distraught, returned to the Pullmans.

He might as well make sure that Griers had thrown off the messages.

AS HE WENT back through the train, he saw that the passengers were frightened to the verge of panic. For even laymen knew that the speed was too great for this increasingly urban stretch of track. And even laymen knew that there must be some dire reason why crowds were on every depot platform by which they whirled, gaping in consternation at the *Bullet*, as though it were a caravan of death—as though every ticket on it were punched to doom.

At sight of Connolly coming down the aisle hatless, disheveled, smudged with coal and rubbing a bruised eye, passengers hurled frantic questions at him. Women grasped his arm and demanded to know what was wrong. A dapper little window trimmer with his hair parted in the middle insisted that Connolly stop the train.

Crash! Crackle! Crash! The thickening frog points cracked like fireworks under the wheels of No. 2. And still they sped on at a mile a minute.

Feeling dizzier and sicker all the while, Conductor Connolly finally reached the vestibule where he had left Archie Griers. Griers was still there, and reported that he had thrown off messages at every station.

And therefore the dispatcher would overlook no precaution to protect the train's lives. He would brush every obstacle from the path of the *Bullet.* Connolly now caught the flash of a passing mile post, and he realized that they had just crossed into the corporate limits of St. Louis. Instinctively he looked at his watch. They were, by an irony from which Connolly could derive no satisfaction, on time to the dot.

A very few minutes later he heard the grinding of brakes. The train jerked, buckled; the wheels hissed. The *Bullet* was losing the peak of its speed. Connolly opened both halves of the vestibule door, raised the hinged trap on the floor and descended to the lowest step. He leaned out and looked ahead. The train was on a straight track now; he could not see the interior of the engine's cab.

But he did see that they were passing a huge suburban plant that manufactured vitrified clay pipe. Acres and acres of tile were stacked in tall batteries along line after line of spur track. Scores of box cars, flats and gondolas were spotted on these spurs. Back of all was a multigabled factory. Back of that was a pavement, a street car line, the congested traffic of a street.

Here, then, was the goal of Raegan. Though bloodhounds might have trailed him through the fields and pastures near Moselle, here among these urban congestions the man might conceivably escape.

The *Bullet* was losing speed. Forty an hour—thirty—twenty.

At twenty miles an hour Connolly, from the steps of the diner, saw a man leap from the engine. He landed running, a tall figure in a brakeman's uniform coat and cap—and in two strides was obscured by a box car spotted on the right-of-way spur.

Raegan, reasoned Connolly, must have chosen the spot, hoping to dodge behind the box car and thence behind a stack of tile without being seen by any one on the train. Indeed Connolly had only glimpsed the figure for two strides, and passengers looking through the glass of windows would, on account of the angle, not have seen it at all.

Connolly himself was now opposite the box car. The fugitive was not to be seen beyond. Six more strides would have put him among the tile. Connolly shouted for the police at the top of his lungs.

But the dispatcher had failed to send police to this particular spot. The train was slowing down, yet in an odd manner, thought Connolly. There was no whine of brakes any longer. It was as though the steam had simply been shut off, allowing the train to coast to a halt.

At any rate the *Bullet* was four train lengths past the box car before it came to a dead stop.

Connolly told Griers to jump off and run back to the pipe factory, to raise the alarm there, to tell the police that Raegan had last been seen dodging behind that spotted box car and to promote, at his best judgment, the hue and cry after Raegan.

Griers jumped to the ground and raced back toward the tile yard.

Connolly, on the gound, took the opposite direction, toward the engine. He was vaguely aware that something was wrong there, even now. At twenty an hour Raegan had relinquished command of the engine. Yet it had taken McNamara four train lengths to stop. Why?

Connolly reached the engine and mounted to the cabin.

"Mac!" he cried, horrified anew. For he found Engineer McNamara stretched either dead or unconscious, on the cabin floor. Fireman Findlay was not there. Connolly guessed that Findlay, badly frightened, had hopped off on the opposite side from that on which Raegan had escaped, and had run back along the train to confer with the conductor.

"Mac!" Connolly's cry as he stooped over the engineer was pitifully hopeless.

But when he felt of the heart he found to his vast relief that it was beating. It appeared that McNamara had been struck over the head, no doubt with the barrel of a pistol, and stunned.

There was iced drinking water in the cab. Connolly held a cup of it to Mc-

Namara's lips and in a moment the engineer opened his eyes.

"Get Raegan. He—"

"Yes, I know," Connolly assured him gently. "They're after Raegan. He hopped off four train lengths back and bobbed off through a tile yard."

He got McNamara to a sitting posture with his back against the cab wall. Then he looked out and back along the train, on both sides, hoping to see Findlay.

He failed to see Findlay, but he did see various male passengers who were coming toward the engine. Among these were Hoffling and Steeger, who volunteered to help.

CONNOLLY, at his wits' ends and on the verge of physical collapse, sadly needed help. He sent Hoffling on the run to a street on the opposite side of the train from the tile factory, to raise a hue and cry among any and all humans encountered, and to phone the police as a follow-up call to Griers'. He sent Steeger back through the train to round up Fireman Findlay.

McNamara was getting groggily to his feet.

"The dirty crook belted me wid a gun," he told Connolly, "while me hand was on the throttle and while we was makin' sixty an hour. Findlay was right by me. Where is he now? Did Raegan heave him off the train?"

Here was another shock. For as Connolly's wits cleared he realized that Findlay, even though badly frightened, would not have jumped off either to summon Connolly or to telephone the police until he had given first aid to McNamara. He at least could have dashed a cup of water in McNamara's face.

"Maybe he did," suggested McNamara. "Or maybe he thought I was dead. I know one thing—that Swede's been scared out of his socks ever since Raegan put the guns on us."

"Just where were we when Raegan hit you with a gun?" asked Connolly.

McNamara, rubbing his throbbing head, looked out and identified his position by a factory sign.

"It was a good siven mile back along the track that Raegan knocked me off me stool. He must have run the ingine himself for siven miles."

Connolly winced, for he now sensed the almost certain fate of the fireman. Having struck down McNamara seven miles back in full flight, Raegan must then have struck down Findlay. For being within seven miles of the place chosen for escape, Raegan could dispense with the fireman, whose fire would already be hot enough for a run of that length.

Once the firing problem was taken care of, Raegan would certainly prefer to be alone in the cab, running the engine himself for the final stretch, unhampered by prisoners.

Which meant, Connolly thought, that Findlay lay dead, a mangled corpse six miles back along the track. Whether he had hopped off in fright of Raegan, after seeing Raegan's attack on McNamara, or whether a blow from Raegan had knocked him off, it was all the same. At sixty miles an hour he could only be dead. His fall would have been so close to the train that passengers, looking from coach windows, would not have seen it.

A greater crowd was assembled at the *Bullet's* outraged engine. While McNamara fueled the fire box—for in spite of death, the devil and damnation the train must still be run the remaining several miles into the station—Connolly interviewed a squad of policemen who had just arrived.

A sergeant in charge told Connolly that a dozen police cars were racing toward the tile factory. Many police were already there searching the tile yard.

Three of the policemen were put on the train with instructions to ride on in to the station, taking notes from passenger witnesses.

In turn appeared Griers, Steeger and Hoffling. They reported that Raegan had not yet been caught. Steeger reported that Fireman Findlay was not on the train, nor had any one seen him.

"He's dead, seven miles back along the track," groaned Connolly.

The sergeant took three of his men and left, promising to cover the track for seven miles back to try to pick up Findlay.

Then, with Connolly and McNamara manning the engine, the *Bullet* moved on. It crept slowly onward, without arrogance, without even the tolling of a bell. Like a creature eternally shamed she slunk on and in, coming to a final halt amidst the clamor of other trains parked under the sheds of the great station.

When Connolly climbed down from the cab, he found himself pounced upon by a mob composed of reporters, detectives and railroad men.

Their din deafened him.

"Hey, Connolly! What about this mile a minute murderer?"

"He shot five passengers and the fireman—is that right?"

These shouts from reporters gave evidence of the exaggerations already rife in the city.

"Clear out!" bawled acting Chief of Police Bannister, shouldering in to get facts from Connolly.

But Division Superintendent Sills, Trainmaster Bush and Chief Dispatcher Gay, refused to clear out. They were all outraged; they joined in tongue lashing Connolly.

"Why didn't you grab Raegan? Why did you let him get away? Of all the balled-up jobs of railroading! A fool stunt—lockin' him in the car! Why didn't you recruit a dozen porters and gang Raegan?"

Connolly could not blame them. He felt the ignominy of the runaway as keenly as they. He knew they weren't thinking of a murder crime. Neither was Connolly. What appalled them all was the far more heinous crime of running a board—the unpardonable sin of railroading. Connolly could picture the entire road disgraced by this scandal, frightful enough now, yet likely to grow into a burlesque tradition of reckless running—like the fable of Casey Jones.

While Connolly was standing there by the engine, taking it on the chin, Archie Griers came rushing into the group. It developed that when the train had first pulled in under the station shed, Griers had run to the nearest telephone to call his paper.

"I was going to tell *them*," he shouted, "but they told *me*!"

"Told you what?" asked acting Chief of Police Bannister.

"That Findlay, the missing fireman, is alive and safe. He telephoned from a drug store three blocks north of the vitrified tile yards and said—"

"Start at the beginning of Findlay's story," interrupted Bannister, while the rest of the group hung breathlessly upon the announcement from Griers.

"Seven miles the other side of the tile yard," recited Griers, relaying information which had been telephoned by Findlay, "Raegan knocked McNamara cold. Raegan then took off his brakeman's uniform coat and hat. He ordered Findlay to peel off his own grimy jumper and cotton cap. Findlay obeyed. Raegan donned the jumper and cab cap."

"He was using his head," commented Bannister shrewdly. "He was getting near the place of escape, and he knew that a hundred eyes would be looking for a fugitive brakeman. So he got out of that blue, gold buttoned coat and trainman's cap. In the fireman's outfit he looked more like a ditch digger. Go on."

"Raegan," resumed Griers, "then made Findlay put on the blue train coat and cap. By now Raegan was at the throttle, though still covering Findlay with a gun. Raegan ran the train seven miles. Then he slowed down to twenty an hour at the tile yard. He told Findlay to hop off and beat it. Findlay, in the buck ague for all of the last hour, obeyed. He kept going until he ran into a drug store, where he phoned his adventure to the police. But as he came out of the booth he walked into the arms of a cop, who, on the lookout for a wild eyed and dishevelled brakeman, pinched Findlay. It took Findlay ten hysterical minutes to prove he wasn't Raegan."

Every man in Griers' audience was astounded. It dawned on Connolly that he himself had mistaken Findlay for Raegan. He had been looking ahead, expecting to see Raegan hop off the engine and run. Seeing a man in the uniform coat and cap of a brakeman hop off the engine and run, he had assumed the runner to be Raegan. There had only been the flash of him, for two strides, twixt train and the spotted box car.

"The point is," suggested Griers, "that Raegan must have planned to create that confusion, centering attention on the tile yard while he himself quietly escaped on the opposite side of the train. The train then, with the throttle closed, merely coasted to a halt."

"No," disagreed Bannister, "I doubt if that was why Raegan made Findlay put on the uniform hat and coat. Let us remember that Connolly, earlier, had popped up from the blind baggage with a gun. For all Raegan knew, he might do so again. Connolly might shoot over the tender. Or a policeman on the right-of-way might take a shot at Raegan. Such gunners would now be confused as to which was Findlay and which Raegan. Making Findlay beat it through the tile yard was probably a last minute trick of Raegan's."

Over a babble of general comment, Connolly made himself heard.

"I don't believe Raegan escaped on the other side of the train."

"Why?" bawled Dispatcher Gay.

"Because fifty passengers were looking out of the south windows and none of them saw any one run from the train. On that south side there were no obstructions, factories, cars or stock piles."

"Have you questioned all the passengers?" inquired Bannister of a policeman who had ridden in on the train.

"Yes, sir. The conductor's right. No one saw a man run from the south side of the train."

"And I myself," cried Connolly, "will guarantee that only one fugitive ran from the north or tile yard side. Since we now know that fugitive was Findlay, I don't believe Raegan hopped off at all."

"Sure he hopped off," insisted one of the policemen who had ridden in on the train. "We've searched the train, inside, rods and roof. We watched both sides all the way in from the tile yard. No one got off. We've had men watching both sides of it every minute since we pulled in under these sheds."

There was only one answer. Connolly, alone of all of them, saw it. And with the inspiration came triumph, after his portion of shame and abuse.

"I say Raegan's still on the train," he insisted doggedly.

"Not a chance!" retorted a detective.

Connolly turned, his cheeks flushed, and mounted to the cabin of the locomotive. Only acting Chief of Police Bannister followed him.

When in the cab, Connolly said to Bannister—

"In the ordinary routine of events, this engine would be shunted to the roundhouse, where it would stand unattended in some stall all night."

"Well?"

"Reagan, a railroader, knew that. I think he planned to sit pat until he reached that roundhouse stall."

Without further word, Connolly stepped from the cabin to the heap of coal in the hopper. From this, followed by Bannister, he scrambled to the top of the tank—sometimes called the water tender. The engine and tender were all one unit, and would have gone together to the roundhouse.

On the tender's top there was an oval lid, hinged, fourteen inches wide by twenty inches long, through which water was received from trackside water tanks. Connolly raised this hinged lid. He exposed the vast and dark cavity of the tender's interior, a cavity which now, after the division's run, contained only a foot of water.

In its deepest and darkest corner, his vehicle of concealment well worthy to match the boldness of his crime and the madness of his flight, crouched the murderer Raegan.

MISSING

By GORDON CARROLL

FOREWORD

IN THE somnolent files of the British Admiralty Office, under the label "command papers," are listed the official losses in the Battle of Jutland, cold rows of figures which bear the weight of blood and iron—stigmata of Britain's glory, and her sorrow. They are compelling, these figures, and stark as the type that prints them; yet misleading, too, for they include the name of H. M. S. *Ledham*, which deserves no space on the page.

Now officially, it is true that the British destroyer did not return to base after Jutland; nor, in fact, was ever seen again

after the bloody May day on the North Sea. On these points, there is no argument. But that does not necessarily prove the ship went down before the flaming guns of the High Sea Fleet. Not at all.

For today, along the shores of the Island Helfers, which is a part of the Orkneys, villagers revere wreckage bearing the *Ledham's* name, cherish wooden fragments flecked here and there with the gray of the king's paint. And among the islanders is a hoary fisherman who, if you press him sufficiently, relates a story that at first will make you doubt his veracity. Then you glance into the man's eyes and doubt fades, for their clear blue holds no lies.

He says that the *Ledham* did not vanish until after the North Sea was clean of the smoke from Jutland, clear of the crumbling echoes that were heard in the sky for hours afterward, like the roll of Drake's Drums off the Devon coast. He tells of an oil slick sighted one day at dawn, high up in the North Sea, and of the awful flotsam it bore.

But he will snap his mouth closed if you voice your puzzled thought, which is that the smear on the waves was seen far to the north of Jutland, while the current of the sea tends to the south. A fleeing ship, you insinuate . . .

However, it is best to believe the old man—for to him and his kind Britain's navy is a dateless tradition and the red in the Cross of St. George is the color of loyal blood.

SINCE early that May afternoon, the smudge of smoke had grown off Jutland Bank, until it coiled for miles and encompassed four score ships, or that portion of the British Grand Fleet which paced the German squadrons of Admiral Von Scheer and fired whenever the haze permitted. The *Queen Mary* was gone, and the *Indefatigable*, and the *Invincible*. Each of the British battle cruisers had belched skyward in a terrible column of orange smoke and flame when the backflash from a blasted turret stabbed into their magazines. The thundering ships to stern plowed through swirls of oil that had been, a few moments before, the might of Britain's pride. As the long gray line closed up, aging men in white caps stared over their bridge rails at the towering spirals of smoke—black fingers spelling catastrophe against the sky. Even the vice-admiral, in his plotting room below the bridge, slumped over the charts—and when he glanced up again, junior officers saw moisture in a pair of eyes which, save for the sting of the wind, had been dry since the vice-admiral's crew stroked to victory at Osborne.

Not two hundred yards away and to port, three British destroyers tore by in a welter of foam and burned oil, their tiny battle flags flying stiff and sharp, like a dolphin's fin. As they passed, the grimed crews raised a cheer and doffed ribboned caps, while astern, the sea boiled—angered at the passage of so much metal. The three destroyers were the *Gosling*, the *Dering*, and the *Ledham*.

The *Gosling* was to vanish later that evening in a turmoil of noise, while the *Dering* limped into the Tyne with her deck plates as crimson as the fading sun. But the *Ledham*, when she passed the flagship's dripping prow, suddenly swung to starboard and crossed over in a great sweeping arc. Her steam steering gear had snapped, jamming the rudder cables in their tubes. At the other end of the great arc was the German fleet, low against the horizon and scudding like the haze that veiled it . . .

LIEUTENANT Commander Alfred Kyrle, R. N., who was commanding the *Ledham*, stared at Von Scheer's distant battle tops—stared until his eyes narrowed, deep in the sockets of the tanned, lean face, and his fists clenched at his sides. A voice at his shoulder reported the broken steering gear and Kyrle waved the man away. Kyrle knew the rudder was locked—and knew, too, that in the whole expanse of the North Sea, this was the one spot where repairs were impossible; a spot made untenable by the greatest

naval battle in history. The knowledge took hold at the tips of his feet and swept upward to the hard jaw, straining the muscles until they quivered like a severed nerve.

Kyrle glanced at the bow of his ship, pointed and sharp as a surgeon's knife, and began to fume inwardly. He loosed a vehement torrent of words—words that damned the crippled steering gear, the cross seas pawing the *Ledham's* hull, the whining shells that passed overhead, the riving thunder of high explosive. And damned, too, the battle orders he had received twenty minutes before. The twenty minutes had passed and the orders now were ineffective—just a sheet of paper to stuff in one's pocket. He placed it there and pulled up his collar to protect his face from the driving moisture—mist mixed with the sour tang of cordite.

Kyrle's helmsman dropped his hands from the useless wheel. The light was bad ahead, the visibility poor, and the North Sea wallowed from the furious passage of many ships. Astern, British ships steamed through the low lying haze, fired steadily into the gray curtain. Wherever German shells struck, great towers of water rose high in the air and then, with a gentle movement, collapsed, froth and spume falling back to the surface in long, lacy lines. All around were oil smears and débris, parting sullenly before the cleave of the *Ledham's* prow. Kyrle wrapped his fingers about the moist bridge rail and stood rooted to the planking, while his eyes roved the sea in search of help he knew, deep in his soul, was not to be found.

At his side, Sub-lieutenant Darcy suddenly moved toward the engine room control and stretched out one arm for the lever. Kyrle's hand fastened into the texture of the junior officer's greatcoat, the tips of his fingers prodding as his tongue fought with the wind.

"Look!"

Darcy looked. Far to starboard, low under the smoke from their funnels, were the outriders of Von Scheer's line—slate cruisers that dashed spray into the air and formed a cordon against torpedoes. If the *Ledham* heaved to, she would wallow helplessly beneath the German guns; if she kept to her course, it meant crashing Von Scheer's gray spearhead. For the space of a short minute, Kyrle studied the face of the engine room indicator. The "full speed" seemed to taunt him; cold, emotionless words that rankled his brain and defied quick solution. Here is your chance, they challenged; the chance of a navy man's lifetime. You're beyond help, anyway, they cried—it's better to meet death with flags on the mast than go down helplessly, a shot riven hulk. Make your last gesture a gallant one, they whispered . . .

Gradually the two simple words smoothed the chaos of Kyrle's thoughts, routed his indecision, until he knew there was just one honorable choice. Ahead it must be—into Von Scheer's spearhead, where one of those ships from Kiel would accompany the *Ledham* to the bottom. He jerked the lever, and the *Ledham* quivered with new life.

Somehow he had prayed for this opportunity ever since he wore the cadet blue—those days at Osborne when one divined that the sparkle of Britain's sea glory had dimmed with Nelson's passing. Days when precise tacticians explained battle problems to a class that yawned discreetly, out of the belief that these problems would never come to life; when Rosyth and Cromarty and Scapa Flow were only names to conjecture with, not mighty studs in England's coastal armor. To the midshipmen, life gradually came to promise merely dull years of routine, with old age and a pension as ultimate reward. There was no chance of sea conflict; the powers were disarming . . .

Kyrle smiled into the cold mist before his face. Disarming, eh? Perhaps they'd forgotten the High Sea Fleet, based at Kiel; the fleet that was far flung today off Jutland Bank, hurling metal death at the British across a sea arena of four hundred square miles! Or the submarines that lurked in the North Sea's cold depths, or the Zeppelins, invisible be-

hind the sodden clouds above. What of the Armada, of Trafalgar, Aboukir, Tripoli? Were these British sea sagas fit only for schoolboys—to be smothered in a snowstorm of paper from The Hague? And the pacifists! Good Lord!

Kyrle snorted in disgust, snorted at the whole long line of internationalists, panaceaists, quibblers.

HERE today, on the North Sea, England's navy played its game, alone. There were no experts to criticise, no politicians to hinder, no sentimentalists to weep. And men were dying like flies because some had said there could be no war. Anger grew in Kyrle's throat and he tasted deeply of it, drew strength from the bitterness of his tongue. No war! Yes, the *Ledham* would pay the price, too; but pay it in a maelstrom of smoke and flame, not to the dusty files of the Retired List. Kyrle bowed his head before the enormity of his thoughts. He had no last plea to make, no message to give; instead, he was only sorry for Darcy, because Darcy had a wife and children, safe in Harwich.

By now the *Ledham* had closed to within four thousand yards of Von Scheer's muzzles and the red fury of the German metal was flaming. A shell tore through the *Ledham's* forward funnel, scattering it across the deck and on to the sea in flaky, hissing fragments. The stays snapped with the crisp ping of a violin string. Another shell pierced the forepeak and when it came out on the other side, five feet of bow plating whined away with it. The human screams reached the bridge and Kyrle, pulling up his collar still farther, moved to the starboard side. As he did so, a projectile laced the splinter mats at the spot he had been standing a moment before. One of the whirling steel fragments caught Guthby, the warrant officer, and ripped the breath out of him. Darcy, too, felt the sting of metal and wiped a scarlet daub from one cheek with the cuff of his coat.

Two seamen appeared from below, carrying a blanket, and removed the huddle that had been the warrant officer, the dead man's binoculars rolling about the planking after their owner was gone. Kyrle heaved the glasses overboard. They were shattered, he muttered to himself, and useless, not admitting that the rasping noise they made reminded him of Guthby, who also had a wife and children in Harwich.

The *Ledham* was curving hard to the arc now and Kyrle calculated they would pass within a few hundred yards of one of Von Scheer's vessels, sweeping down from the north, drawing closer every moment. All the while, below the bridge, the *Ledham's* forepeak gun barked and chattered, a challenging voice lost in the thunder that rolled across the waves. Kyrle wondered if the shots were finding a mark—wondered until the realization came that the gunners were firing like madmen. He snatched up a telephone and shouted into the mouthpiece, but the sodden click of the wire told him the lines were shot away. The instrument fell from his hand, crashed to the bridge. Communication was impossible; the crew was acting on its own.

Kyrle turned to shout at Darcy but a great explosion off to one side drowned the words, and he stared at the rising column of water until the *Ledham* passed it and the froth was left astern. The sea seemed a dancing chorus of ghosts, its veil of mist shredded by steaming metal.

Kyrle picked out one German cruiser from the line ahead and knew they would meet it. At one hundred yards distance, he decided. One hundred yards—close enough, but not too close; a torpedo was certain at that range.

He made his way down the twisted ladder from the bridge, set foot on the main deck and faced amidships. Scrambling, pawing, stumbling, he came to the torpedo tubes and paused abruptly to stare at the blue-black cylinders, each filled with a ton of potential death. Gradually a great feeling of satisfaction crept into Kyrle's soul; fifteen years in the navy were welded together, inseparably, by

the fierce fire within him—the flame of exultation. He sucked in the air between his teeth and made his way back to the bridge ladder; but the rungs on which he had descended were shot riven and curled, like the ends of scorched grass. Kyrle plodded across the littered deck and found the port ladder. All the while, he was shouting in a loud voice, but no one seemed to answer him; the men he passed stared at him with blood rimmed eyes and gaping mouths. Yet in some manner, Kyrle sensed, he had made his orders known. That was sufficient; he became content.

He reached the bridge in time to see the high gray sides of a German light cruiser, one hundred yards away and passing rapidly on the *Ledham's* beam. Her muzzles, in line with the *Ledham's* superstructure, burned into the haze, and the oily brown from three funnels rolled down to the waves, flattening out on contact and spreading across the sea like dust before a giant broom.

With one hand Kyrle motioned to the powder blackened scarecrows by the *Ledham's* torpedo tubes; with the other, he ripped open his coat and bared his chest to the cold mist. From the pit of his body, wild words swelled and were snatched away by the wind, lost in the tumbling waves astern. Each beat of his heart accentuated the choking sensation in his throat; his tongue was light, close to the roof of his mouth. For a moment, he thought of the gold insignia on his cap —and gloried in it.

THE TORPEDO left the *Ledham's* tube at the same instant the German cruiser fired her last broadside. Kyrle felt, rather than saw, the salvo's detonation, and little yellow flecks of flame danced through his brain. Every tendon in his body was wrenched by the concussion; the veins in his hands seemed stiff and hard. Then he saw the torpedo strike the German's side—a fractional second before it exploded. A great hole appeared in the cruiser's hull, and steel plates went spinning and screaming upward, wrapped in froth and fuel oil. The reverberation tossed the *Ledham* like a chip and she staggered and fell back, slashed of superstructure and most of her crew. The stabbing blast of the German salvo had enveloped her, end to end.

Kyrle found himself lying on the main deck plates, fifteen feet below the destroyer's bridge, while a scarlet stream wandered down the scuppers and disappeared overside. Vaguely, he wanted to touch the crimson tide but found he could move neither arm; the muscles were numbed by shock. He called out; there was no answer—only the banging and scraping of loosened metal, and the whine of the wind.

Not five feet away, slung about a stanchion, was the body of a seaman, burst like a mealsack. Empty shell cases clattered from side to side with the shudders of the *Ledham's* hull. Broken wires and halyards were criss-crossed everywhere. The German broadside had been a gigantic vacuum sweeper, sucking all before it.

Dimly, Kyrle realized that the *Ledham* was still moving and so he rolled his head to one side, the side nearest the sea. The waves were still rushing by; the plates beneath his body trembled to the pulse of the engines. At least, the *Ledham* was afloat. Her adversary, Kyrle knew, had gone—gone to the bottom, perhaps in ninety seconds. Far to port was the heavy thunder of the German dreadnaughts; beyond the *Ledham's* stern was the lighter pounding of the cruisers, sweeping southward in the course of battle.

The sky overhead grew strangely dark, and with a mighty effort Kyrle pulled himself to his feet. As he stood erect, the face of Darcy appeared, beyond where the shattered sides of the conning tower bulged. Kyrle weakly waved one hand at the sub-lieutenant and then laughed—a queer, wild laugh that scared even himself.

In response, Darcy drew closer, staring into Kyrle's face intently, as though seeking there something he knew, all the time,

he would not find. And Kyrle returned the stare, though his eyeballs hurt and he had to blink rapidly to clear his vision. It slowly dawned on him that Darcy was oddly silent, passive. He looked more deeply. Why, damn it, the junior officer was in a trance! His set eyes passed through and beyond Kyrle, as if the commander stood not there on deck but far over the side, above the North Sea. Kyrle stretched out one succoring arm toward Darcy but the sub-lieutenant frowned and pushed the hand away. His eyes turned a deeper shade of red and frightened hesitancy stole into his features. Kyrle laughed again, loudly.

"Buck up, old fellow," he said. "Anyway, we're still alive."

There was something oddly the matter with his voice—something stiff and lifeless—Kyrle realized, yet he was sure Darcy would understand. But did he? What was wrong with the junior officer? He merely stood there and batted his eyes, like a child rudely awakened. Then abruptly, without a sound, Darcy moved, stepped closer and placed one arm about Kyrle's shoulders.

"Come," he said in a high pitched voice. "Let's go below."

Kyrle decided to humor Darcy, and allowed the younger man to lead him off. In a way, it all seemed natural.

The wardroom was black and silent; overhead, water dripped through the plating—the plating that was smoke-stained, bent and cleaved. Some of the moisture spattered Kyrle's head and he suddenly knew his cap was missing and his clothing torn to tatters. Damp penetrated swiftly to the skin. But Darcy merely pushed him toward a seat and when they reached it, the junior officer sat down beside him in the gloom. Kyrle felt the other's hand tighten about one of his own.

"We're lost," Darcy said. Kyrle turned slightly, but the sub-lieutenant's face was indistinguishable.

It was rot, all this. Have to put an end to it. He patted Darcy's knee.

"We're not lost," Kyrle replied and fumbled in a pocket with his free hand, drawing forth a small square of paper, crackly to the touch. "Here," he added, and placed it before his eyes; then realized there was not sufficient light.

"Hold a moment," he muttered, and rose groggily. There was a faint scraping noise as he explored about in the gloom, and then the sputter of a match. Somehow, he pulled down a hanging lamp and lighted it, although his fingers weaved and he had to strike a second match. As soon as the lamp was going, he returned to Darcy's side.

"See?" he said, a queer note rasping his voice. He began to read.

Every trace of animation had fled Darcy's eyes, and his face, and his body. Kyrle, too, was rigid but his voice went on, intoning somberly. The words came to Darcy's ears from what seemed an incredible distance.

"Urgent. Priority. Divisions separately alter course in succession to south at 7:32 P.M. Speed seventeen knots. Destroyers take station astern of Battle Fleet. Five miles . . ."

Kyrle rose swiftly.

"Remember your responsibility, Mr. Darcy," he said, and stumbled out of the wardroom through a jagged, gaping hole in the steel side of the deckhouse.

Gusts of salty breeze, invading the torn plating, touched Darcy's face, but the sub-lieutenant did not feel them, for he had fainted. The splotch of red on his coat collar, where the cheek wound bled slowly, widened under the gentle heaving of his chest.

OUT on the *Ledham's* deck, Kyrle blinked at the chilled gray of the North Sea twilight. There was still an odd, spinning noise in his head and a strange throb in his throat, which were only accentuated by the cold air. He grasped a wrenched railing and tried to steady his legs from the roll of the ship, for she was moving fast, the *Ledham*, and bursts of spray from her bow showered down and over the shambles that had been her decks. Riven

fingers of metal stretched upward in seeming supplication; bits of stained débris lay everywhere; ropes, charred and frayed, flapped with the sound of a great passage of wings.

Kyrle took it all in with wide eyes, forgetting that the concussion of shell fire had shattered the stabilizing nerves of his brain. There was left only incredulity, and a willingness to accept everything at its face value.

The dim silhouette of a man took shape forward, came groping aft, crawling over the wreckage. The man paused before Kyrle and the latter recognized Banks, third in command. But Banks, like Darcy, just stood swaying on the deck, the hint of a rattle coming from his throat. Kyrle grasped the rail more firmly. That spinning noise was growing in his head, he knew. Damned silly, it was, in a man of his age. Ears had stood for more at target practise. A little percussion? Pshaw! All nonsense! But there was the hum again . . .

He shook his head and as he did so Banks swayed a little closer and collapsed, a silent heap at Kyrle's feet. Then steps came out of the gloom and invisible arms lifted Banks from the deck. Kyrle followed the footsteps back into the wardroom.

In the glow of the hanging lamp, he saw two men from the black gang supporting Banks. They turned on Kyrle with question in their eyes. Wearily, he pointed to the bench where Darcy lay crumpled, and Banks was placed on the leather cushions by comforting hands. The two engineers then moved toward the hole in the cabin wall but Kyrle halted them. Swiftly his glance was drawn to their faces, and swiftly came the realization that these men, too, had vacant countenances, as vacant as Darcy's features in slumber. By Jove, Kyrle muttered to himself, he was surrounded by ghosts!

"Hold!" he said sharply. "You, Jenkins—"he indicated the nearer of the two men—"go forward and tell Mr. Everett to report here. Tell—"

"Sorry, sir," the water tender broke in apologetically, "but Mr. Everett's dead."

Kyrle's knees began to twitch again.

"What's that you say? Mr. Everett's dead?"

"Yes, sir." The man's voice was dull, emotionless.

"Get Mr. Neall, then."

"Sorry, sir. Mr. Neall's dead, too."

Come, come, Kyrle warned himself. Things were getting ridiculous—out of hand. Have to take up a hitch. Everett dead, Neall dead. Was any one left on this weaving hull?

"Both dead, eh? Well, get out of here and learn who's still alive. Tell 'em to report here, all that's able. Hop it, now!"

The water tender vanished, his heavy jacket scratching against a splinter of steel. The other engineer stood silently, waiting. Darcy snored softly on the bench. Banks' face was whitish gray, devoid of all lines, the muscles slack. A blanket of chill settled down on Kyrle's shoulders; a new lump crawled into his throat. The smell of sodden clothes rose to his nostrils and faintly nauseated him. He turned abruptly to the other water tender.

"You, Barrett, go below and get busy with the engines. Tell the crew to save fuel."

Kyrle then swung about to gaze at the reclining Darcy. The sub-lieutenant was not badly hurt—perhaps just shock. As for Banks—h'm. Chap might be in a poor way. No telling about a man when chalk-like circles formed beneath the eyes. Well, it couldn't be helped. What counted most now was clear heads. Deckhouse like a sieve, crew blasted off the face of the sea, hull strained. And yet the ship was still afloat, still moving.

Kyrle patted the linoleum floor beneath his feet with a touch of affection. Wanted to put the *Ledham* on Retired List in '14, eh? This would show 'em. No hull like an old hull, when one considered shipbuilding nowadays. They had always contended— But it was time to go out on deck again.

THE FRESH air pulled Kyrle together. Miles astern, dull splashes sputtered across the sky, the last retorts from a thousand angry muzzles. The *Ledham* was cleaving a clean sea. Save for the smell of blistered paint and burned hemp, the air, too, was clean, for the haze had vanished. Ahead, the long swell of the North Sea rolled beneath an overlapping sky. The *Ledham*'s engines rumbled like a giant bellows, slowly, monotonously; and Kyrle, listening to them for a moment, thought to go down into the hull. Instead, he stepped into the wreckage of the charthouse.

His foot caught on a yielding object and he made out the body of Chett, the quartermaster. In a way, it was no shock to Kyrle; there seemed to be a plenitude of bodies. Everett, Neall, Guthby, and now Chett—a long row of names as lifeless as their owners. The faint hum returned to Kyrle's head. He sat down on a splintered signal locker and tried to think.

Below deck, Darcy moved on the wardroom bench, loosened his coat, while the light from the emergency lamp embroidered yellow streaks on his face. As consciousness came back, he explored the room with his eyes. Excepting for Banks, slumped on the cushions, it was bare. Darcy rose to his feet, rubbed the fiery throb on one cheek and groped across the cabin to the hole that served as a door. With the glow of a pocket flash, he picked out Kyrle's face in the charthouse, and the commander glanced up. Darcy felt a tinge of pity—pity for Kyrle. In those few moments, before the older man spoke, there was an uncanny silence, broken only by the thump of the engines.

"We're returning to port, Darcy," Kyrle finally said. "Instruments all shot away, but we can make it, eh?" A short pause. "As for me, I'm tired—all dished in. I'm going to sleep, going—"

Kyrle pitched forward from the signal locker, fell amid splintered glass, torn wood, charred bits of cloth. An outflung arm saved his face. Darcy leaned over his superior, felt beneath the jacket, sensed the throb of the heart. He nodded his head in the darkness. Then he clambered back to the deck, cutting his hands on the serrated steel, and made his way aft with a handkerchief wrapped about the nicked fingers. He disappeared down the hatch that led to the engine room, the heels of his shoes clinking against the metal rungs as the warmish odor of fuel oil rushed up the shaft to meet him.

Down in the hull, Darcy was momentarily dazed by the whir of the moving mountains of machinery; it had been so quiet, so ghastly quiet, above deck. Little sparks appeared before his eyes and his head ached, but he walked slowly across the oily gratings until he found what he sought. Darcy placed one hand on the broad shoulders of a man who sat slumped by the grating rail. The shoulders heaved, the oiler—Barrett—stood up. What the hell, Darcy thought; the fellow's out on his feet! Had the same look that Kyrle flashed when he pitched face downward on the débris in the charthouse. It puzzled Darcy—puzzled him because he had never seen shell shock before. He drew himself up slightly.

"The engines?" he asked in a calm voice.

"Half speed, sir," the oiler vouchsafed. "All fit, sir."

"Keep to that speed," Darcy said. "Controls shot away, see? Word of mouth from now on."

"Yes, sir."

Darcy started to leave. He paused.

"How many left down here?"

"Myself, sir—three others. The rest is gone, sir." The oiler pointed ahead.

Darcy saw a pair of shoes extending beyond a turn in the rail. They were toed in, the shoes, and lifeless. Beyond was a crumpled mass of clothing, with the semblance of a man beneath. Darcy's eye roved and he saw other huddles. He bit his lip.

"I see," he commented in a tone as dull as the oiler's. "Clean up things down here, d'you understand?"

The oiler stumbled away across the gratings.

Darcy went above deck and managed the rungs to the bridge, while a dull ache pounded in the pit of his stomach. He felt around in the dark of the charthouse, caught Kyrle by the arms, and as he lifted him, the commander's eyes opened. Kyrle breathed deeply, relaxed into a faint smile, clutched Darcy's arm for support.

"Oh, it's you, Darcy? Rum thoughts I was having. Dozed off—couldn't help it . . . Got to get back to port now."

The younger man inclined his head.

"But the rudder—?"

"Oh, yes—the rudder." Kyrle fingered his jaw, repeated the words slowly. Funny he hadn't thought of the broken rudder before. He took hold of himself and tried to grasp the situation.

A glance ahead, into the gray of the night, told him the rudder cables had somehow slackened a bit; the *Ledham's* course had straightened—probably northeasterly now. The bow was steady, he felt; the yawing had ceased. He knit his brows in reflection and found the mental task an effort. Slowly, one thought took shape uppermost—the *Ledham* must keep under way. German ships were probably scattered over a wide area, and a floating hulk like the *Ledham* was helpless. No radio, no crew, no rudder. It might take hours to repair the steering gear—and hardly an able man aboard.

Heave to and wait for daylight, perhaps, and a round of shots from a straggling Hun? Reduce speed to headway and give the subs opportunity to pot a craft that had no helm. Not much! Neither solution would do. Hell of a fix!

But hold on! A northerly course was gradually taking them away from danger. Ahead was Norway—the Scandinavian coast—with shallows abounding, anchorage for repairs. Never been tried before, perhaps, but why not—with the *Ledham?* Granted a little luck, they might be in and out in a day. They could take fuel, if need be, where they found it. It was the simplest solution, the safest . . . A surge of the old elation shook Kyrle; the warm sense of well-being returned. The *Ledham* would make home port, come the devil!

Then without warning, a tiny wire snapped in Kyrle's brain. He heard the cold click and it bewildered him, numbed and sapped his strength. He thought to glance at Darcy, and did, but Darcy was laughing. Laughing! The junior officer's mouth was wide open and great peals of senseless mirth rose to his lips, were stolen away by the wind. Kyrle tried to raise one arm but it was stiff; so was the other.

Suddenly a cold chill took possession of his muscles and shook him like a taut rope. He, too, began to laugh—loudly, inanely, helplessly. There on the bridge the two men stood, bulky, sodden figures, and roared into the night that closed in on four sides. Below decks, the black gang of four lay comatose on the smeared gratings, heads nodding to the pulse of the abandoned engines. Shell shock had taken overshattered nerves.

AS THE NIGHT laid a cloak about the *Ledham,* twenty miles to the west another propeller wake creamed northward on the sea, hidden, too, by darkness. It was a straight white ribbon, this wake, and curled backward from a submarine running awash—the *U-201,* which had fought and then fled at Jutland, after a depth charge hammered her diving apparatus. British destroyers were lacing the sea between Skaggerack and the Jade River Bar, and the *U-201's* commander, Rittler, decided that safety lay to the northward; that is, safety of the open sea, the only haven a submarine knows when it can not dive to the black depths. So the North Sea lapped at the conning tower, rolled and sloshed over the after deck, rippled away as the Diesel engines held to twelve knots. Rittler awaited the dawn, a clean horizon, and a try at the crippled machinery. It would take six hours at least.

The dull reflection of the binnacle lamp touched Rittler's face as he stood on the forward end of the bridge. It brought out the heavy features, the blunt nose, the scar on one cheek, the cropped mustache. A slicker was about his shoulders, against the mist, and on his head was a cap, long vizored, rubberized. He turned to speak gruffly to Ehrert, third in command.

"I am going below," he said. "Hold to this course, reduce speed one third. Wake me at dawn. Understand?"

Ehrert bowed his head; then stepped aside as the commander passed by and disappeared down the conning tower hatch. Ehrert glanced at the binnacle, yanked his collar up about his wind-burned face, settled back against a supporting brace of metal. Except for the damp, he was comfortable. Astern, only the wake rolled away, with the tiny clouds of vapor just above, betraying the Diesel exhausts. Water sloshed gently down the superstructure scuppers and soothed Ehrert's emotions, badly upset by the scarlet day just past.

It was a day that had really started the night before, when the mess room at Cuxhaven was static with rumors—predictions that the Fleet was going out at dawn. Similar rumors had sped about before, but this time there was the flavor of authenticity to the whispered words. *Der Tag, Der Tag,* they seemed to say. And during dinner Rittler, at the end of the table, had lifted his glass high, shouted a pregnant toast, which was echoed down the board—

"To the damnation of the British!"

A dozen tongues picked up the phrase and bellowed it about the room until the china on the table trembled and the pictures on the walls shook. But after the toast, Rittler kept his lips sealed, for he had taken the oath of secrecy at headquarters. The night grew old to the sound of popping corks, clicking talk, harsh predictions.

At dawn the submarine flotillas nosed out into the North Sea, heading for Skaggerack and the smudges of smoke that meant the British patrol. Beneath the set lines of his face, Rittler was jubilant, and imparted some of his elation to the *U-201's* crew. The men were more alert at their stations, the machinery whirred more smoothly, even the air inside the hull seemed cleaner than for months. And all because the general staff had kept its whispered promise—the promise that, before the end of 1916, the High Sea Fleet would meet Britannia on the waves.

Rittler had paced about the *U-201's* control room, fingered the instruments nervously. When the mid-morning coffee was served, he set his cup on the rack and spoke to Ehrert.

"You will discover, my friend," he said, "that the British are cowards. They outnumber us on the surface and yet they do not attack. It is we who have to venture forth, far from our bases, and throw down the challenge. The English. Bah! Swine!" His lips curled.

"But you think they will accept this challenge today?" Ehrert asked in a respectful voice.

Rittler shrugged.

"Who can tell? I know the British navy well—on paper. But on the sea—that is something else. They will not give fight, I think, unless their numbers are great. For all their talk, the English do not like a ship-to-ship conflict. They are afraid of our guns, our superior equipment, our morale." Rittler reached for his cup with a savage movement.

Ehrert, who was younger and somewhat new to the navy, could not keep the look of disappointment from his face. Something of the sparkle in his blue eyes faded, something of the trimness in his posture vanished. Then Rittler laughed on a full note, and slapped Ehrert's shoulders.

"Do not worry," he said. "We will get action—we of the submarines. The British can not run from something they do not see. But the surface fleet—well, it may come back empty handed."

Ehrert felt better after this, and crawled up through the hatch to the bridge, for the *U-201* was running awash, ahead of

the line of warships plunging northward toward Little Fisher Bank. Glancing over the rail, Ehrert stared down at the water, hardly fifteen feet below him. It was cold water, this North Sea, and green, but the surface was smooth, heaving gently under the swell from Horn Reef.

On the starboard beam, the German advance of five battle cruisers—Hipper's command—steamed past swiftly, the silvery plumes from the bows curling high. There were three of the *Derfflinger* class; two of the *Moltke*. Far astern was the main body under Von Scheer—twenty great ships screened by a cordon of light cruisers and destroyers. Ahead and off the port bow were Beatty and Jellicoe, invisible through the mist yet plowing southward with their hands on the straining leashes of Britain's wardogs.

The sense of impending drama came home to Ehrert, standing on the bridge, and quickened his pulse. He gazed ahead at the forward gun, silhouetted against the sea; then glanced aft, where the water boiled under the thrust of the propellers. Overhead, the Imperial standard crackled in the breeze. *Ach Gott*, it was glorious. If the British would only fight!

AT THREE O'CLOCK in the afternoon, the action started suddenly. Ehrert caught the signal from the flotilla leader and relayed it to the control room. Even as he scrambled for the hatch, a gong vibrated harshly inside the *U-201's* hull and the crew sprang to battle stations. The last sound from the surface of the sea, as the *U-201* began to submerge, was the hollow boom of the guns, which penetrated down through the metal plates and made itself heard in the control room.

"They have commenced!" Rittler growled deep in his chest, and then glued his eye to the periscope.

At his shoulder, Ehrert trembled with expectancy. A deep silence settled down on the craft, broken only by low voiced orders and the hum of the motors. Rittler gave his commands slowly, meticulously; yet he, too, was alive with excitement. *Der Tag!*

Twice in the next half hour the *U-201* submerged to seventy-five feet; twice it came upward again until its periscope barely traced the surface. Radio directions were of little avail, due to the weather. The mist was heavy, and Rittler, eye to the high powered glass, was afraid to risk a chance shot. Better to wait, he said to himself; the British could not see.

When the glass broke water the third time, Rittler eyed Hipper's advance force, curved slightly southeast, firing steadily. The long fingers of flame stabbed out from the muzzles and burned orange in the gray day. Destroyers were screening the larger ships, racing madly back and forth like skates on a water pond. The commander called for increased speed and the *U-201* nosed northward, heading for the British line that opposed Hipper. The orders Rittler had received earlier were confusing, and he changed them to suit the running battle; commenced to talk in a monotone over one shoulder, his words reaching Ehrert's ears, for which they were intended.

"It is poor, the visibility. Mist—and a great deal of smoke. Our ships are steaming fast, evidently in parallel with the English. Destroyers active. I can see vessels ahead—British, I think . . ."

Ehrert thrilled to the last words.

"Yes, they are battle cruisers—*Invincible* class. *Ach Gott!* Look!"

Ehrert set his eye to the cup, stared through the lenses. Four thousand yards ahead, a great finger of oily smoke towered into the air, spread out at the top like a mushroom, while at its base, yellow flames lapped across the sea. Shouldered out of the water, the outlines of the seething pillar quickly dissolved into a black, outshowering mist, and from that mist leaped a giant. Up, up, he towered, tossed flailing arms three hundred feet a branch, shivered, and wreathed into a cataract. The water below was lashed into agony, then subsided. Ehrert shuddered horribly in spite of himself. He did

not know he had seen the end of the *Indefatigable* and the nine hundred men aboard her. Rittler took the glass again.

"Light cruisers standing by the wreckage. We will close in. All tubes loaded?"

Ehrert took his lips from a rubber mouthpiece, where he had been snapping orders.

"All loaded, sir."

Five minutes passed. Then:

"Stand by!" Rittler called. "Right rudder, left a bit. Left—that is right! Bow!"

Ehrert touched the wheel and the *U-201* heeled slightly. Rittler, watching the crosshairs line against the gray sides of a British light cruiser, eight hundred yards away, rapidly studied the attack calculator on the board before him. Then he pressed the firing lever and a slight shudder came from forward, a dull rumble from the torpedo room. Across the surface of the North Sea a silvery line sped from the *U-201;* a moment more, another line embroidered the waves.

The two torpedoes diverged slightly after traversing two hundred yards; Rittler was allowing for drift and change of pace. Soon the silvery lines were lost in the surface haze and the U-boat commander had only the target to watch— a trim gray target that steamed past the wreckage of the *Indefatigable*, searching hastily and in vain for survivors.

Ehrert sensed the drama before Rittler's eyes, but he held his tongue, which was incumbent upon a junior officer. He could only study Rittler's facial movements, the twitch of the commander's shoulders, the tremble of his heavy hands. The tenseness had invaded the whole hull, bringing a look of keen expectancy to the crew and a pregnant silence to the bowels of the ship. In the control room the metal instruments seemed to glint ominously—the metal of diving rudder wheels, blowout valves, depth and pressure gages, steering gear, periscopic sight-pieces, torpedo firing controls . . . The *U-201* had been built for war; her sinews were ready for the test today.

Rittler exhaled sharply, like a man who has had lifted from his soul a heavy burden. The periscope spread a panorama before him—a scene of smoke and flame, which means a U-boat's job well done. The starboard torpedo struck the British cruiser just forward of the bridge and rent a great hole in her plates. Instantly the ship began to settle by the bow and, although the distance was too great for fine detail, Rittler visioned the stark surprise aboard the cruiser, the frantic movements on her decks. He was fascinated, and held his eye to the glass, powerless to move away. It was this delay that brought death close.

Rittler was slowly turning the periscope to keep pace with the *U-201's* progress. Suddenly, far to the side of the circular scene, he had a fleeting glimpse of a British destroyer, bearing down on the *U-201* in a flurry of foam. Just a glimpse, but it was sufficient. Even as the periscope cables were being drawn down, housing the tubes, Rittler saw the destroyer's bow, bobbing and weaving through the waves, the funnel smoke astern spreading out like a clutching hand. Rittler bellowed his orders.

A TREMOR took hold of the *U-201* and shook her as the submarine's nose went down in a quick dive. Ehrert handled the control wheels with frenzied speed; worked quicker than he ever had before, because the iron in Rittler's voice was born of trepidation. The *U-201* was safe from surface shell fire, but there were depth charges—huge, canlike bombs that punctured a U-boat's sides like fingers poked into a rotted orange. For the first time that day Ehrert sensed the grimness of war. He thought of the green cold water all about and a tiny shudder stirred him; then he swallowed hard and bent to his task. Another silence came to the control room, but it was an unpleasant silence, like that in a musty vault, where the world and its warmth are kept away. The other members of the crew were harsh, iron faced, above their instruments.

The *U-201* leveled off at 150 feet. Two minutes passed and the submarine kept smoothly to her course, deep in the comforting cloak of the sea. Slowly a smile spread over Rittler's face; the scar on his face became red again. He turned toward Ehrert.

"We fooled the dogs," he said. "Half speed!"

Ehrert put his lips to the mouthpiece, drew in breath to repeat the order to the motor room. But even as he moved, the *U-201* shook and trembled, and rolled hard from side to side, while her sides resounded like a giant anvil. A depth bomb had exploded off to one side, all but shattering the U-boat's hull.

The concussion of the charge hurled Ehrert to the gratings and he lay there, while small objects rattled about the control room. Rittler was still standing, clinging to an upright. The electric bulbs flickered, went out, came on again. A deathly stillness settled over the boat, broken only by the muttered curses of those who had been thrown to their knees. Then the lights increased in brilliance and from aft came the reassuring whir of the dynamos. Ehrert tried to smile as he arose, but it was a weak effort. Rittler frowned.

"A close one, that," the commander finally muttered. Then another slight shudder shook the *U-201's* frame, subsided—a second depth charge, but far away. The frown left Rittler's face.

"They have lost us," he said. He turned to stare at the compass card. "Full speed!" he snapped at Ehrert. The motors took a new lease on life and the *U-201* leaped forward.

The course was northeast. Rittler called the radio man and the latter reported the sound of propellers in the hydrophone as still sharp, yet gradually diminishing.

"Good!" the commander said. "We will turn back to the action."

A smile of satisfaction spread across his hard bitten features. But it was his last smile of the day, for his lips straightened as Ehrert touched his shoulder. He followed the junior officer's outstretched finger.

The needle of the depth gage was suddenly possessed of self-volition; slowly but inevitably it showed a decreasing margin. Rittler quickly glanced at the indicators, which showed even keel. Then he stared at the depth gage; then at the indicators again. Every trace of the commander's smile vanished; Ehrert stood erect over the chart, where, with bowed shoulders, he had been plotting the course. Their thoughts suddenly became grim. Rittler spoke first.

"Planes jammed," he muttered, half to himself. Then the commander spun on his heel and moved away, heading forward to inspect the delicate instruments that were the heart of the *U-201*. Ehrert was left to the silence of the control room, and the harsh breathing of a dozen men, still at their stations. Aft, the motors hummed; beyond them, there was an occasional voice from the battery room. Rittler's footsteps faded away in the distance, behind the bulkheads. The depth gage continued to rise, line by line.

Rittler returned, stalked through the control room, vanished into the radio cubicle to listen at the hydrophone. The fans were cut off as the commander fixed the headpiece over his ears. The electric bulbs above his head set into relief Rittler's strained features, the hard lines of his mouth; but as the seconds ticked away his features relaxed, the mouth curled. There was noise in the hydrophone—the dull pitched, distant hum of a large ship's propellers—but the higher whine of the destroyers was missing. The small boats had evidently sped on about their business; there were more important tasks today than tracing an invisible submarine. Events on the surface were all absorbing.

Rittler returned to the control room.

"We will not bother with the adjusting tanks," he said to Ehrert. "The British destroyers are gone. We will hold to this course and gradually emerge. I think we will find a clean sea at the surface."

Ehrert agreed with him. Their course was taking them steadily northward at ten knots an hour, while the trend of the battle was to the south. The fans purred, the motors hummed, the depth gage continued to rise slowly. In the radio room, the operator sat with the headphones, alert, grim—ready to report disturbances in the sea. But the propeller lashings only faded farther into the distance.

HALF an hour passed and the depth gage hovered at thirty feet. There was something almost mechanical about the manner in which the *U-201* rose; as if some giant but unseen hand of Neptune pushed the cylindrical hull closer and closer to the surface. The periscopes grated upward, Rittler fixed his eyes to the glass. Gently, the tubes broke the surface. The commander sighed.

"There is nothing," he said. The eyepiece slowly revolved. "Nothing ahead or astern—except dull sky and sea." He jerked one thumb upward. "Take the bridge." Ehrert nodded.

The junior officer opened the conning tower hatch and stepped out on to the upper side of the submarine. As with Rittler, only the gray North Sea and a heavy sky met his hurried glance. At first he thought he smelled gunpowder in the air—but perhaps it was only the bite of the wind in his nose after the fumes below. There was a faint growl in the sky, far astern. The surface fighting was still in progress. Ehrert reported laconically to Rittler. The commander's voice came back gruffly.

"You will remain above," he said. "The gun crew is coming up."

Soon three seamen, bulky in oilskins, clambered up the ladder and huddled on the forward bridge, faces down to the clinging mist. The gun stood stiff and stark against the fading day; the seamen talked among themselves in lowered voices. Ehrert swept the sea with his eyes and occasionally spoke down the tube to Rittler. Barring the grumble of guns to the south and the slight pumping of his heart, Ehrert reflected that everything was much the same as at battle practise. Very much the same.

Except for the depth bomb, there had been little to stir one's blood. Two torpedoes fired, a hit—registered through the periscope—a sudden dive, the concussion of a charge deep in the sea. There was no smell of high explosive, no firing of guns at a visible enemy, no maneuvering through a curtain of smoke—in fact, no color. For a moment, Ehrert felt a tiny pang of regret. Perhaps it might have been better on the warships; he could have served there . . .

The junior officer remained on the bridge until 8 P. M., when he went below to sleep. At midnight he resumed the watch and Rittler left. The commander sought to put distance between himself and the British before the *U-201's* engines halted and she hove to for repairs. The general staff preached caution to submarine skippers; U-boats were so expensive, the number so limited, that every effort must be made to avoid risk of failure and destruction.

Dawn breaks early over the North Sea in June and at 3 A. M. the first streaks of the coming day lighted the east. Ehrert watched the growing glow on the horizon, stared through the surface haze for the first mauve of the sunrise. But the mist only thickened and by 4 A. M. the visibility was down to two thousand yards. He called Rittler.

The commander rose through the hatch and stood beside the younger man, eyes smoldering beneath the brim of his cap. He swept the sea; there was nothing. Gradually, the light grew stronger. Rittler nodded in satisfaction.

"It is good," he said. "We will lie here."

The engines slowed to headway; then halted and the submarine rocked in the easy swell. A seaman took Ehrert's place and the third officer went below with Rittler to supervise the repairs. Tool kits were broken out; the engineers gathered in small knots about the crippled machinery. Rittler stood on the grating and watched the operations, Ehrert at his

shoulder. The first sound of hammer on metal vibrated through the hull; the first harsh breath of the men at work filled the small room.

Up on the bridge, the seaman stood and stared into the mist about the *U-201*. Neither sound nor sight met him. A second gun crew came above and huddled on the forward deck. It was chilly and the mist penetrated to the skin. All four men listened hopefully to the sound of the repair crew, deep in the hull; the faint hammering noises soothed their nerves. Perhaps as the second watch rolled around the *U-201* would be homeward bound with one trophy to her credit—a trophy earned in the heat of battle. Flags would fly high over the Cuxhaven berth!

ABOARD the *Ledham*, Kyrle was the first to see the faint shadow, close to the surface and dead ahead. Dawn was tingeing the sky and threw the gray object into relief against the haze of the background. It was too far away to discern clearly, yet there was something faintly familiar about the silhouette. Kyrle swallowed hard. Hell, he was dreaming! No submarines in this part of the North Sea. They were all far to the south. Must be a trawler, a fishing boat . . . He nudged Darcy.

"See it?" he muttered.

Darcy nodded his haggard face.

"Boat," he replied moodily. "Trawler, what?" But still he did not move. It took Kyrle's tongue to stir him.

"Get below, quick!" Kyrle cried. "Stop the engines! We're closing in!"

Darcy departed, shuffling across the deck. Control of his muscles had left him —they did peculiar things. For instance, he wanted to run now, and couldn't. Little sparkling pains shot through his legs, as though he had been sitting in a cramped position for hours; his eardrums pained and the wet wind cut his eyes like a knife on raw flesh. He helped himself along by grasping the warped deckhouse plates, finally reached the engine room hatch and slid down the ladder. The toe of one of his boots stirred a sleeping man.

"Jump to it!" Darcy croaked. "Close your main stop!"

The engineer, dull eyed, made his way to the great wheel. He fumbled here and there with his hands, and the sound of the engines slowly ceased. The pistons halted. Calm descended on the ship. Darcy clambered up the ladder and went forward, where Kyrle met him, pointed ahead with a numbed finger.

The shadow on the waves was still dead across the bow and a thousand yards distant. Even as Kyrle's hand pointed, the shadow took definite shape—the outline of a long, low lying hull, a bulging conning tower, the lean finger of a gun on the foredeck. There was sudden movement by the conning tower and a cluster of black dots ran forward on the deck, huddled about the gun. A pregnant pause and then off the *Ledham's* bow a graceful white plume of water rose slowly into the air. It mounted up and up until finally, with an air of weariness, it broke into a cloud of silvery mist and descended back into the sea. Kyrle and Darcy regarded it with an intent stare, in which the film of the night just passed faded from their bloodshot eyes.

"What the—!" Darcy cried.

But there was another long drawn out wail and another graceful plume broke the sea ahead, a hundred yards closer. The explosion galvanized Kyrle. Something of his old self stirred in his veins and the coldness left his nerves. He pounded Darcy between the shoulder blades until the junior officer gasped into life.

"Come!" roared Kyrle and tumbled down the bridge ladder to the main deck, where he broke into a clumsy run for the forepeak.

There, mounted on a tripod warped and twisted, pointed the forward gun, shells in a box lashed to the base. Kyrle hovered over the breech, his fingers fumbling, while Darcy lifted the long brass case. A glimpse along the barrel—the range finder was shattered—a shell slammed home and *whang!* the gun spoke with a thundering detonation. Kyrle snarled. Too short!

The shell hit the water three hundred yards the near side of where the submarine's gun stabbed the mist. Came another flicker of light through the haze and a screaming projectile from the U-boat tore above their heads and whistled the length of the *Ledham*.

Darcy smiled—a wan turn of the lips. The numbness had settled down on his brain and body again, but he functioned automatically at Kyrle's shoulder. All color had fled the commander's lean face; he snarled and muttered at the gun, lifted its nose a trifle by a supreme wrench on the elevating wheel. Again the muzzle flamed. The metal broke the sea one hundred yards short, whined away across the submarine's conning tower. Kyrle opened the breech once more. Darcy tugged at the shell case. Then the junior officer began to curse, too, for the brass was jammed, the case burst. He dropped his hands to his sides. Kyrle rose to his feet. Suddenly, their thoughts became the same. They would ram the U-boat—ride it down, just as their ancestors had ridden down the armored men at Agincourt and Cressy.

Without a word, Darcy raced aft along the deck, disappeared down the engine hatch. Kyrle climbed over débris and set his hand on the bridge ladder. The third shell from the submarine ripped into the already shattered deckhouse on the port side, and went screaming through wood and metal, showering fragments into the sea. Kyrle touched the bridge planking just as the thump of the *Ledham's* engines resumed. There were now five hundred yards of calm sea between them and the submarine ahead.

Down in the hull of the U-boat, twenty men worked with frenzied speed. But because they were hasty, a switch on the main board blew and they lost sixty seconds in getting under way. Ehrert came tumbling down the hatch into the control room and the gun crew followed, wet with the mist and muttering in cold, harsh voices.

The hatch closed; the motors began to purr, Rittler's hard face froze.

Ach Gott, if they could only elude this mad destroyer that had appeared from the fog! A destroyer without masts or funnel, superstructure or crew! With two men on the forepeak who fired a lone gun like novices—shots scattered and wide, across the ocean. A British boat, Ehrert had said in a frightened, cold voice, as though his eyes did not believe—a British destroyer that plowed crazily across the waves like a wraith in the fog, bore down steadily.

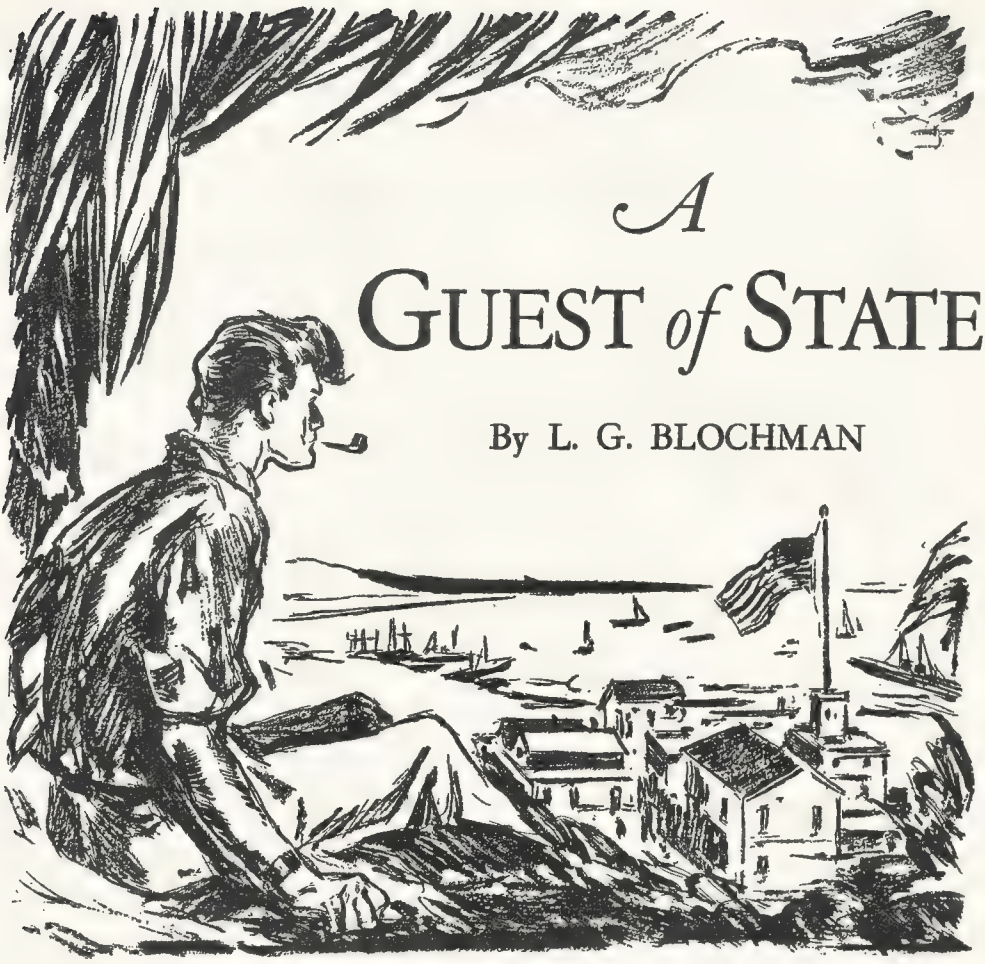
Where had it come from, where was it going? Was it real, even? God save us—the mad British!

Kyrle and Darcy saw the German crew scuttle below, saw the first faint foam at the submarine's stern as the motors started. They knew, in a stark flash of intuition, that the German was crippled as they were; that it was running for life itself. And they read the great white figures painted on the submarine's conning tower—*U-201*—dead across the *Ledham's* bow.

The destroyer knifed into the submarine just forward of the conning tower. There was a riving crash, the awful whine of wrenched plates, a great sigh as the sea poured into the U-boat. Then a shudder took hold of both hulls and the submarine dropped away, down into the cold water like a plummet. A swirling mass of oil curled away across the surface of the sea; a dull explosion in the depths forced terrible débris to the top.

The *Ledham* staggered ahead like a spent horse at the finish. A hundred yards it went until suddenly, like a sponge, it sucked into itself the water that raced through the bottomless hull. Then, with a gentle quiver, it darted forward on its nose and the water lapped up its sides swiftly, as though the foam were running tongues of flame. The sea enfolded the forepeak, the lone gun, swept across the bridge and enfolded Kyrle and Darcy. In a moment the whole ship was gone. The last bubbles rose to the surface and broke with a tired sigh.

Then the sea was flat as it had been before.



A GUEST of STATE

By L. G. BLOCHMAN

THE IMPRESSION prevailed among the lower white stratum of Manila's leisure class—sometimes called contemptuously "scum of the beach" by the upper white stratum—that Frisco Cameron was not quite bright.

At times Frisco was as torpid and lethargic as any intelligent beachcomber. He could be as indolent as Baldy Squair himself, and could get roaring drunk on cadged drinks. *Roaring* is not an accurate description of the sounds Frisco made when primed. For the first few rounds he was apt to sing in a tenor voice that was more or less lyric, and pleasantly sentimental. At the fifth drink his voice usually got a little hollow and raucous; and finally, when cadging had been good and Frisco had progressed into the more ribald numbers of his repertoire, it became a loud, off-key braying.

This side of Frisco's character was quite intelligible to his fellow drones. They had known him ever since he first hit the Philippines, a smallish, thin man with angles that seemed to have been rounded off by years of slothful postures. His shoulders sloped downward; there was a gentle, leisurely droop to the upper end of his spine; and his legs were a little bowed. He was not old, although there were a few gray hairs at his temples. His walk gave the impression that his skeleton was constructed of resilient material

that bent slightly with each step. Outwardly he was accepted as an admirably carefree and aimless person—except for peculiar mental crises that seized him at irregular intervals.

The spells came as suddenly as tropical rainstorms. When they struck, Frisco became silent and brooding. He would sit for hours in the Cantina de los Dos Hermanos, ignoring any one who spoke to him. A strange look would come into his dark, timid eyes—a look which was variously interpreted as stupidity or incipient insanity. Whatever it was, at the climax of these spells, Frisco would disappear without a word of explanation. Then, several days later, some member of the fraternity would come to Baldy Squair with a goggle eyed story of having seen Frisco walking down the Escolta in a clean white suit, and of Frisco having told him he was working!

Sometimes the report that Frisco was working would come from Ilo-Ilo or some other southern port; and once Frisco had even gone all the way to Shanghai on a job. Fortunately or unfortunately, as the point of view is, these spells of respectability did not last long. After a few months Frisco would cut himself adrift again, and sooner or later would end up in the thick walled, stone floored barroom that for Baldy Squair's Manila coterie represented the "beach."

More than the usual mystery had surrounded Frisco's last disappearance. Some one with money had dropped into the Cantina de los Dos Hermanos, and the evening had reached a high point in revelry. Nobody in Manila had seen Frisco quite so alcoholic. He was so drunk that he played the piano. For more than an hour he banged on an old upright, painfully out of tune. The boys gasped at the sure fingered way he pounded the tinny notes into a semblance of music. Nobody had ever heard Frisco play before, and more than one wondered why he had never made use of this classic and sure fire method of garnering free drinks.

The physical labor of playing must have sobered him up, because he stopped suddenly in the midst of a piece, and looked around the room, startled. He stood up, as pale as bleached hemp. He started to rush away, and was almost crazy with anxiety when Baldy Squair stopped him.

"What's the matter, boy?" Baldy inquired. "Sick?"

"I shouldn't have done that!" said Frisco in a choked voice. "I must be off my nut. After all this time, I've let people know I'm a piano player!"

"Don't take it so hard," said Baldy. "Of course, it ain't nothing to be proud of, but at the same time they can't put you in jail for it."

"The hell they can't!" shouted Frisco, pushing Baldy aside and disappearing into the night.

It was eight months later when Frisco next walked into the Cantina de los Dos Hermanos, whistling *Dardanella.* He stopped whistling as he saw the rosy dome of the back of Baldy Squair's hairless head gleaming faintly from its accustomed place in the cavernous gloom.

"Hello, Frisco," said Baldy, without turning around.

He had recognized Frisco's whistle; for the past six years Frisco had apparently been unable to think of anything else to whistle but *Dardanella.* But even if he had not recognized the whistle, Baldy would not have turned around. Any such effort would have been unworthy of the laziest member of Manila's laziest brotherhood. It was Baldy's genius for inventing ways to avoid work that made him the admitted dean of Manila's loafers.

"Hello, Baldy," Frisco replied.

"Collapse into a chair," said Baldy, "and gargle some beer. I got money."

AS FRISCO sat down, Baldy did not move. Careful research had revealed to Baldy the best position for restful drinking, and he assumed the same pose every morning, scarcely stirring all day. He sat slouched in his chair, his right elbow on the table, and his chin leaning on the palm of his right hand. His left hand was in his pocket. He sipped his beer through

a straw, as he could thus drink by merely shifting his head slightly—obviating the exertion of moving either hand to raise the glass to his lips.

"Where you been, Frisco?" he asked. "Not working, I hope?"

"Hell, no. I been on the beach for fair, this time. I'd never tried the game outside the ports before. It's great. The little brown brothers admire a guy who can be as lazy as them, as they sure are open handed. I was down in Bohol, with plenty of shade and bananas and green coconut milk, a *nipa* house—not a thing in the world to worry about."

"And I bet you quit it to go to work."

"No. I quit it on account of this—" Frisco produced a torn scrap of newspaper. "Some gin came over from Dumaguete wrapped in a California newspaper. I glanced at it, casual-like, and I see this thing staring me in the face. Read it."

Baldy made no effort to take the clipping.

"Read it out loud," he said.

Frisco cleared his throat and read in a monotone:

> "San Francisco, February 2.—Court action was begun here today by William J. Bush, one-time circus performer, to establish legal proof of the death of Charles B. Bush, his cousin and former associate.
>
> "The Bush boys were once famous for their 'Duet of Death', a concert in a cage of lions, with Charles at the piano and his cousin tooting saxophone and clarinet to put the animals through their tricks.
>
> "Charles Bush disappeared seven years ago after a brawl in a speakeasy which nearly proved fatal for his cousin. Legal proof of the death of Charles Bush is sought in order that the survivor may be declared sole heir to an estate originally left to the two jointly.
>
> "Hearing is set for March 30."

"Well," said Baldy when Frisco had finished reading, "what about it?"

Frisco moistened his lips. He was perspiring profusely.

"Baldy," he said, "I got to get five hundred pesos somewhere."

Baldy Squair lifted his chin off the palm of his hand for the first time in two hours. He turned to stare at Frisco.

"Boy," he said, "you been out in the sun without a hat."

"I'm not kidding," said Frisco. "Don't you get it? 'The hearing is set for March 30.' That's just a month off. I got to get back there or they'll prove I'm dead. Charles B. Bush is me. Bush is my real name."

"I wouldn't bother about it, if I was you," said Baldy. "It's a lousy name. Sounds like a banker or something. Frisco Cameron's a better name to hang on to."

"Listen, Baldy. I took that name when I thought I was wanted for murder. Bill Bush and I had a row over some money an uncle left us seven years ago. He pulled a gun on me—the gun he always carried on account of the lions. We fought for it, and in the scramble, I shot him. I thought I'd killed him, so I ran, scared to look back, and hopped a boat that was leaving for the Orient a few hours later. But now I've found out Bill ain't dead and I'm not a murderer, I can go back and get my cut of that money."

"Do you have to go back? Can't you fix things from here?"

"I tried to," said Frisco. "I raised a few pesos and cabled Bill that I wasn't dead by a helluva ways. You know what answer I got back? Just two words: 'Prove it.' "

"Well," said Baldy, "if you got a hankering for that sort of thing, I suppose you ought to do something about it. I always thought better of you, though. Even if you did bust out and work once in a while, I had an idea you was civilized at heart."

"There's a steamer leaving Thursday that will get me back just in time for that court hearing," said Frisco, "but it costs damned near five hundred pesos for a ticket on her."

A series of peculiar clucking and gurgling sounds issued from Baldy's throat.

"My Gawd, Frisco!" he finally exclaimed. "You wasn't figuring on *paying* your way home, was you?"

"I don't see no other sure way of getting back on time," said Frisco. "I got to

make that fast passenger boat, and if I stowed away, they might put me ashore before we got out of the Orient, even. The ship makes Shanghai, Kobe, Yokohama."

A great sigh issued from within the flabby depths of Baldy Squair's interior. The sage of the Cantina de los Dos Hermanos went to all the exertion of shaking his head sadly.

"If that's the kind of twisted, clock punching soul you turned out to have after all these years," he sighed, "you sure ought to go back. But you ain't going to do anything radical like paying your fare. That'd be carrying it too far."

"Hell, Baldy, if I had the dough—"

"Listen. As long as good hearted, soft headed tax payers keep Army transports ferrying back and forth across the Pacific, there ain't no reason why any intelligent American like you or me should go contributing to capitalistic steamship companies. You know damn well, Frisco, that all you have to do is prove yourself a public nuisance, a disgrace to the white race, and an impediment to the prestige of the American insular administration—and blooie! Home you go on the first Army transport leaving the islands."

"You mean I ought to get deported?"

"If you got influential friends, they'll call it 'repatriated'; but birds like you and me, they just deport."

"But there's only about one transport a month."

"They's the *General Wood* sailing tomorrow noon," said Baldy. "That gives you all afternoon and evening, and tomorrow morning to disgrace yourself in. Can you do it?"

"Sure," said Frisco, "but—"

"No buts," interrupted Baldy. "I'll give you three sure ways to scandal and dishonor. I guess you'd better start in on the Army. They're touchiest and uppitiest. There ain't a captain in the *cuartel* what don't know more about the islands than the governor-general. And as for the second looies just in off the last transport, why they don't even admit there *is* a civil government in the Philippines. Now, to make the Army mad—"

"I ain't got nothing against the Army," said Frisco.

"Of course you ain't," agreed Baldy, "particularly as they're going to provide you with transportation. And neither have I. But you want to get home, don't you? All right, then listen. Sam Beenis has got an old busted camera that one of the boys found yesterday. Take it and go prowling around something strategic."

"They might throw me in the jug on Corregidor."

"Naw, they won't be no film in it. But you can make yourself undesirable as soon as you attract attention. Then they'll deport you."

"And if they don't?"

"Well, there's the police. You can usually find that hard boiled Sergeant Griswell hanging around the Rosario of an afternoon. He ain't so hard to antagonize . . . And after that, there's Malacañan. I guess you'll know what to do out there."

Frisco nodded.

"Then we'll have a *despedida* drink together," said Baldy. "*Mozo!* A coupla San Miguels."

A drowsy Tagalog boy, with a gauze tunic that hung over his trousers like untucked shirt tails, came to look over the row of coins that Baldy had arranged on the table top that morning to avoid fishing in his pocket at each round of drinks. In selecting the price of two drinks, the *mozo* dislodged a five centavo piece which dropped to the floor. Frisco stooped to pick it up, but Baldy merely moved one foot slightly so that his heel covered the coin.

"Don't bother," said Baldy. "I'll get it when I go home tonight . . . Well, here's luck and a safe deportation. I'll be looking for you back in few months."

"No chance," said Frisco. "Now that Charlie Bush ain't a murderer after all, why Frisco Cameron is going to disappear for keeps . . . Here's how!"

"How," echoed Baldy, sucking on his straw.

A FEW MINUTES later Frisco Cameron was walking through the stifling streets of Intramuros, the old walled city of Manila that stews aromatically in its own juice, without benefit of whatever breeze might exist outside the historic Spanish ramparts. He skirted buildings to take advantage of the little shade thrown by overhanging second stories. He wound in and out among gray, crescent horned carabaos lumbering along with cartloads of hemp. He dodged pony drawn *calesas* jogging through the hot, blinding sunlight. His clothes were soaked with perspiration by the time he came to the weathered gray bastion of a former Spanish fort.

The brightness of the American flag seemed incongruously new, flying above the old stone fortifications. So did the American soldier in the gateway, a doughboy with a pale blue cord about his campaign hat, standing beneath some seventeenth century coat-of-arms carved into the keystone of the ancient arch. Frisco had the empty camera under his coat. As the sentry on the gate merely eyed him indifferently, he went inside. He imagined he would be considered far more deportable if he were caught taking photos inside the ramparts.

He walked about undisturbed for ten minutes. He saw chiefly wooden barracks, a few shirts hung on a line, and soldiers peeling potatoes. There did not seem to be many strategical secrets concealed about this *cuartel*. Then he spotted two guns planted atop the old, grass grown, Spanish parapet. They were small field pieces, with slender barrels pointing out toward Manila Bay. They might be merely saluting cannon, for all Frisco knew. But they seemed the most likely things in sight to photograph. He hauled his shell of a camera from under his coat and maneuvered about the guns as conspicuously as possible. Almost immediately a sentry hove into view.

"Hey, you!" exclaimed the sentry. "What's the idear?"

"Figure it out for yourself," replied Frisco, seeming very busy with his camera.

"Whatcha think you're doin'?" demanded the sentry.

"Taking pitchers. What did *you* think?"

The sentry walked quickly toward him, stopped suddenly and looked about. Then he relaxed and struck a pose in front of one of the cannon.

"Get me in it," he said, lowering his voice. "I wanta send a snap to my goil in Brooklyn."

With the sentry's sheepish smile, Frisco's hope for a prompt and speedy deportation faltered. It did not vanish altogether, however. Frisco had not finished with the Army. He did not relish his present job, as he had always got on well with soldiers in the islands, and even had a distinct sympathy for the sentry now striking a grinning attitude in front of him. Still, that transport left at noon tomorrow.

"Listen, soldier," said Frisco. "If you like this girl in Brooklyn, take my advice and don't send her no photos. If you don't keep reminding her what you look like, maybe she can stay true to you."

The sentry's grin faded in slow comprehension.

"Hey, you! Don't get fresh. Remember I can toin you in fer perntin' a camera at them guns. It's against regulations."

"This for regulations!" Frisco briskly raised the tip of his left thumb to his nose and moved his fingers in the general manner of a fife player executing rapid and difficult arpeggios.

"Yeah?" said the sentry, advancing.

"Yeah," echoed Frisco, continuing the arpeggios, "and this for you."

The sentry took two quick steps and kicked the camera from Frisco's hand. As he watched it describe a graceful trajectory to fall outside the ramparts, he grabbed Frisco's arm.

"I'll teach you to show disrespect fer the uniform," he declared. "Corporal of the guard!"

In due time Frisco stood before the officer of the day, a thick necked red

faced, slick haired second lieutenant with a bulldog jaw.

"What's all this about, Corporal?" demanded the officer of the day.

"A civilian who's been making filthy and insulting gestures at a sentry on dooty, Lootenant."

"What gestures, Corporal?"

"I was doing this," volunteered Frisco eagerly. He thumbed his nose eloquently in the direction of the lieutenant.

The enlisted men present squirmed with suppressed amusement. The officer of the day arose and banged his fist on the desk top.

"Enough o' that!" roared the lieutenant. "You're a pretty poor specimen of an American, you are! You're a disgrace to American enterprise in the islands!"

Frisco was smiling happily. He marveled at the genius and foresight of Baldy Squair in predicting this scene. He was as good as deported already.

A knock sounded at the door.

"Lootenant Thornbull, pardon me, sir, but Mrs. Thornbull is here, sir, and says—"

"Tell her to wait!"

"She says she has an appointment, sir, and can't wait. She insists on coming in."

Frisco thought he saw his chance to complete his disgrace beyond all doubt. Again raising thumb to nose, he repeated—

"I was doing this."

The officer of the day cast a quick glance at Frisco, then at the door, behind which a feminine voice was raised in protest. His manner changed. He ran his hand over his hair. He lowered his voice somewhat as he said—

"All right; show her in, then."

The orderly disappeared.

"And as for this man—" he glared at Frisco— "take him out, Corporal, and kick him off the post. We ought to teach him a lesson, but we've got too many of our own troubles in the Army to be bothered with civilian bums."

As Frisco was being hurried through the door of the orderly room, a frail wisp of a blond girl passed him on her way in. She turned supercilious blue eyes upon him as he was rushed away. Frisco was conscious of a perfumed wake that remained behind her.

The corporal of the guard, with the aid of two privates, carried out Lieutenant Thornbull's instructions to the letter, then appended a few refinements of their own devising. Thus when Frisco picked himself up out of the glaring dust beyond the *cuartel* portals, he felt not only keen disappointment at the first failure of deportation plans, but also a general jostled condition of his viscera, bruised areas on the nether side of each thigh, and a painful bulging sensation under his left eye. Although he had no mirror, he could well imagine that a process of swelling and discoloration was creeping from cheekbone to eyebrow.

He brushed himself off and started for the Rosario. If the Army had no time to take offense at his scandalous conduct, there was still the police to be convinced of his undesirability. Sergeant Griswell was the man to antagonize, Baldy Squair had said.

FRISCO strolled down the street of Chinese shops for fifteen minutes before he recognized Griswell. He followed for half a block, watching the exponent of law and order saunter past sidewalk displays of strange and evil smelling comestibles, shops of money changers and general merchants. Frisco noted the flattish, crooked nose of the ex-soldier turned policeman as the sergeant stopped to cast a suspicious eye upon a silk merchant bent over an abacus, his fingers busily snapping the wooden beads back and forth on some intricate calculation.

Opportunity beckoned. Frisco responded.

With a yell, he bounded into the first Chinese shop at hand. Shouting meaningless phrases at the astounded Oriental proprietor, he began pushing things over. He wanted to make an impression of great destruction, all in doing no damage. A kindly feeling was generated within

him by the look of terror on the moon face of the pot bellied Chinese shopkeeper rushing toward him. Out of the corner of his eye, however, he noted that Sergeant Griswell had taken cognizance of the disturbance and was headed his way. That transport was sailing at noon tomorrow—he renewed his shouting and waved his arms wildly.

The Chinese began to shout in his turn, filling the stagnant air with polytoned monosyllables. He grabbed one of Frisco's whirling arms, throwing the American off his balance. Frisco backed into a basket of *papayas*, upset it, and sent the melon-like fruit rolling into the street.

Then Sergeant Griswell blustered into the shop.

"What's going on in this *tienda?*" he demanded. "Hong Kim again!" He was addressing the Chinese. "Didn't I tell you that next time I had a complaint against you I'd break your heathen neck? What's he doing, buddy? Short changing you, I'll bet."

"No," said Frisco, somewhat subdued. "You see, it was me—"

"And the beggar *hit* you!" exclaimed Sergeant Griswell, staring in indignation at Frisco's half closed eye, his parting gift from the *cuartel.* "He banged you right in the lamp."

"He didn't hit me," protested Frisco. "It was—"

"The hell he didn't hit you!" the police sergeant interrupted. "Wait till you get to a mirror and look at that eye he gave you. It ain't an eye any more; it's a goose liver."

"But, Sergeant," Frisco continued in protest.

Sergeant Griswell ignored him. He had turned fiercely on the Chinese and was profanely making him understand the heinousness of hitting a white man.

"He ain't to blame, Sergeant," Frisco insisted.

"Don't tell *me* about this Chino," said Griswell. "He's a bad *hombre.* This ain't the first time me and him have met. I got a good notion to have him deported."

"This was my fault—"

"Listen, buddy, don't try to teach me my business. You run along and put something on that eye of yours before it swells up as big as your nose. You leave this Chino to me."

Convinced that his task was hopeless, Frisco turned away and walked down the Rosario with heavy feet. This business of getting deported wasn't as simple as Baldy Squair would have one believe. Still, there remained the last of Baldy's suggestions: Malacañan. This seemed to Frisco to be the most promising of all. He should have tried it first, he told himself. It didn't seem possible that a man who went out to Malacañan Palace and insulted the governor-general of the Philippines could fail to be deported.

Arriving before the gubernatorial headquarters, Frisco was a trifle overawed. The governor-general had been nothing but a name to him—a name, for the most part, which made easy rhymes in barroom ballads. His imminent materialization gave Frisco an anxious moment, but the exigencies of the occasion triumphed. He made his way into the grounds and walked to what had been indicated to him as the executive wing. He saw an open window and installed himself before it. Then he threw back his head and lifted his voice in song, praying that his tune might come to the ears of his Excellency, Thaddeus P. Moon, governor-general of the Philippines.

"Hey diddle diddle, may I ask you a riddle,
Concerning our Governor Moon?
Who plays second fiddle? What's gone from his middle?
What officer caused him to swoon?"

The verse had been written by a disgruntled minor official, who, on his discharge, had made a singing entrance into the Cantina de los Dos Hermanos. It concerned the minor official's allegations that the governor was altogether too self-effacing in the presence of the island military authorities. This was probably the first time the song had been presented publicly; it was evidently new to the ears

of the young secretary who appeared in the open window and was listening with some amazement.

ENCOURAGED by the sight of an audience, Frisco forced his voice into a somewhat hoarse crescendo. He abandoned politics—his first offering had been the only number on his repertoire with a serious theme—and launched into a series of limericks originally written about the King of Siam, a young man from Dundee, and various European monarchs, but adapted by the barroom troubadours of Intramuros to apply to Governor Moon. The limericks had an anatomical flavor, and were full of picturesque similes.

The young secretary disappeared from the open window and returned a second later with another young secretary.

Stimulated still further, Frisco sang more loudly and slightly off key. He now chanted another series about the governor and the domestic animals at Malacañan.

He noted that the number of secretaries in the window had now increased to four. They were all listening solemnly as became young secretaries at Malacañan, although their faces did not register quite the shocked dismay that Frisco had hoped. He launched into the most ribald verse of his repertoire, in an effort to force the issue. Something had to happen pretty soon, because he was practically out of songs about the governor-general.

As he was finishing his verse, something did happen. One of the young secretaries disappeared from the window and came outside. He walked toward Frisco with a grave face. Frisco's heart leaped in expectation. At last!

"Say, old man," said the secretary. "The boys want to know if you'll write out the words to some of those songs."

Frisco stared. Did they have to have written evidence, to deport a man? No, it wasn't that. The grin that crossed the youth's face told of a different purpose. Mistaking the reason for Frisco's reticence, the youth went on.

"If you'll go around in back, we'll see that you get something to drink. We got a big kick out of those limericks. But it's damned lucky that the governor left today on an inspection tour of the provinces. If the Old Man had been here, there'd have been hell to pay."

"When is the—when is he coming back?" faltered Frisco.

"A week from next Friday," said the secretary.

"Hell!"

Overcome with disgust, Frisco spun on his heel and walked rapidly away.

As he walked, his disgust turned to despair. Was there no way a fellow could prove himself a fit subject for deportation? What the hell was the matter with the authorities, anyhow? Couldn't they recognize a bum when they saw one?

As he thought about his plight, Frisco's despair changed to rage. He increased his pace. He walked rapidly, almost furiously, until perspiration made dark patches on the back of his khaki coat. He hardly noticed where he was going, so intent was he on his own indignant thoughts.

After he knew not how long, he found himself near the shore. He caught sight of the water through the tattered banners of a plantain tree. The setting sun had strewn the bay with fluttering bits of crumpled gold leaf. Unconsciously Frisco slackened his pace.

Something of the calm of evening, of the tranquillity of the purple haze that lay upon the city, seeped into Frisco's soul. The sting of disappointment, the indignation at the workings of fate, slowly faded. He was filled with peace. He was able to admire the silhouette of a long legged *nipa* shack standing at the water's edge, black against the sunset. He stopped, leaned against a tree, and fumbled in his pocket for a smoke. He withdrew a fragment of black cigaret, rolled from cigar clippings, lighted it, and inhaled contentedly.

He saw two Tagalog girls standing under a coconut palm, talking. The yellow light shone through the diaphanous material of their puffy sleeves and gilded

their bronze arms. One of them laughed. It was a light, unreal laugh that set up strange vibrations in Frisco's consciousness. It reminded him of his delightful months of careless, effortless existence on the beach at Bohol. It made him suddenly realize that he no longer cared if he went home or not. He resumed walking.

He walked slowly now, slowly and easily. He was no longer worried about the transport that left next day. In fact, he definitely did not want to sail with that transport. He wanted to go back to Bohol, to leave Charles B. Bush decently dead in America, while Frisco Cameron resumed the drowsy, agreeably purposeless manner of living into which he had been gradually slipping. He would live on love and *mangosteens*, drink palm wine, fish on Sundays if he could remember the days, sleep, look at the sky. Once a year he would bum a trip to Manila and drink with the old cronies. But everything that he used to consider important—finished forever!

He laughed to himself as he thought that only a few moments ago he had been making ridiculous efforts to be able to go home and resurrect Charles B. Bush. What a headache that would be! A mad rush, railway trains, telephones, noise, a struggle to take advantage of your fellows so that you might have food and clothing. Clothing! Back home people were bundled up in overcoats at this time of year, cursing janitors because the heat was not turned on. Winter! No need to worry about winter here. An old pair of trousers and a shirt would do you the year around —even less, if you were on the beach and could sit and perspire quietly in the warm shade . . .

FRISCO was skirting the Luneta now. He felt a great friendship for groups of Filipinos passing before him, brown people clad in white, moving across the expanse of green, bound for the constabulary band concert. Strains of music came faintly to his ears, softened by distance, wistful in the caress of the breeze, in harmony with the nacre dusk. The world was indeed a peaceful place.

Frisco stopped at a road, while traffic streamed by him: Jogging *calesas*, funny *carromatas*, an occasional motor car. A flashy sport roadster passed, with an American youth and two laughing girls in the front seat. The horn of the roadster sounded a sharp, metallic note as the car roared away. A pang of regret stabbed Frisco. For three seconds he was in the depths of melancholy. Then the pang vanished. Frisco breathed deeply, happy that it had passed so quickly. He was afraid of those pangs. They had come upon him at intervals, like the survival of some social instinct, like a jangling, jarring note of reality in the smooth fantastic symphony of pleasant oblivion he had been living. They had been the voice of Charles B. Bush, crying to be kept alive, wrangling with Frisco Cameron the usurper, driving him to periodic fits of honest work, giving him the moments of respectability that surprised his fellow drones.

But these moments had been coming less and less frequently, were of shorter and shorter duration. Frisco Cameron had been slowly but surely throttling Charles B. Bush. Even this last frantic appeal of Bush, this desperate, vain attempt to save his life, had been strongly colored by the personality of Frisco Cameron. And now Frisco had triumphed.

Frisco turned his steps toward the Pasig. He would canvass the mates on the little inter-island ships tied up three abreast in the coffee colored river and find one that was going south tonight. The oily smell of copra came to him on the breeze, blowing from the river. He smiled, puckered his lips to whistle *Dardanella.*

Suddenly aware that his route lay in the direction of the *cuartel* from which he had been evicted that afternoon, he detoured. His foot kicked something that slid along the ground. Looking down he saw a woman's handbag. He stopped to pick it up and, still walking, examined it. He noticed that one end of the strap handle had been torn loose. He opened the bag. It contained a compact, a perfumed

handkerchief and a roll of banknotes.

With his finger he poked about in the bag in search of some mark of identification. He found none. Then he let his thumb run over the edge of the bank roll. He blinked as the denominations flashed by. There must be four or five hundred pesos in that wad! He stopped whistling, but his lips retained their pucker. He snapped the bag shut, grasped it tightly, and continued walking.

Money! There was enough money in that bag to take him back home. He had no clue to the owner. It would be a simple matter to remove the pesos, throw the bag away, and buy a ticket on the passenger liner that would get him back in time.

Yet Frisco Cameron had just decided to let Bush remain dead. And Frisco Cameron would not require money in the life he had projected for himself. A little money would come in handy on the beach to buy gin now and then—but this was too much. With these hundreds of pesos, Frisco would worry, and the greatest attraction of life on the beach at Bohol was that it was absolutely devoid of worry. He didn't even have to worry about gin, since every *nipa* palm was a potential source of fermented liquor. No, Frisco didn't want this money. Without relinquishing his pace, he made an abrupt movement with his hand, as though to throw the bag away. Then he stopped short, still clinging to his find.

A strange thought occurred to Frisco, a thought which really belonged to Charles B. Bush—or the memory of Bush, since Bush was now dead. Frisco was breaking his last bond with society. It would be a fitting gesture, therefore, a gesture worthy of Charles B. Bush, to end his connection with respectability by one final social act. He would exit with a bow. He would hand over the bag to the constabulary or the police, so that it might ultimately reach its owner. He stuffed the bag under his coat and started walking.

After five minutes he spotted a police station. He quickened his steps. Just before he reached the entrance, his right arm was seized from behind. He turned to face a scowling policeman.

"You thought you'd get away, did you, you thievin' white rat, you?"

"I was just going to turn in a lady's handbag I found," said Frisco.

"Found, me eye!" countered the policeman. "You snatched it. I been followin' you for half a mile, and you knew I was followin', too, because you tried to get rid of your booty. You started to throw it away, but you saw me watchin', so you thought you'd try this story of findin' it. Get up stairs with you. Go on. *Siguel*"

The police officer at the desk upstairs looked at the lady's handbag.

"Get the lady who reported her bag stolen this afternoon," he ordered his brown clerk. "Tell her to come down and identify it."

Half an hour later the lady arrived. She was a frail wisp of a blond girl who exuded little eddies of perfumed air with each movement. She identified not only the handbag but Frisco Cameron as well.

"This man was being put out of the *cuartel* when I called to see my husband, Lieutenant Thornbull, this afternoon," she said. "He must have waited and followed me. He's certainly the person who snatched my purse!"

The police officer at the desk glowered.

"You're the kind of man that's a disgrace to American prestige in the islands," he said. "About six months in Bilibid would fix you."

Frisco's face brightened. He knew men who had spent time in Bilibid, and they reported it a pretty fair sort of prison. When he got out he could go down to Bohol . . .

"On second thought," continued the police officer, "Bilibid's too good for a bird like you. Got any money of your own? Of course not. No job either, have you? When you got out you'd begin right where you left off." He sniffed, then turned to his clerk. "Lock him up for the night, Rizal. We'll rush him to court first thing in the morning and get a deportation order. I want to ship him out on that transport sailing at noon."

GAMBLER'S CHOICE

By HENRY HERBERT KNIBBS

JUNE along, cayuse! We'd better june;
We've spoiled the dance and we've stopped the tune.
Three tombstones in a row.
Two men dead in Gophertown,
Two men dead and a third man down,
And the gun smoke swinging low.

When he shoved his stack and I turned the ace,
The fool! I can see Jack Fortune's face
As white as the hilltop snow.
White at first, then a rush of red.
"Spider, you're crooked as hell!" he said.
Crooked? Well, mebbe so.

Derringer hid in a gambler's sleeve
Spoke once, and I saw Jack Fortune weave
Like a pine when the high winds blow.
His friend Jim Price, he'd be alive,
But the hand that went for his forty-five—
June along—was a mite too slow.

June along, cayuse, and curl your tail;
It's a cold, dark night and a long, dark trail;
The third was Bigfoot Joe;
He showed his badge and he made his play;
It was too damn bad he went that way,
But I reckon he had to go.

Crowding their ponies flank and flank,
Kicking sand to Cottonwood Tank,
The boys of the O-Bar-O,
Making a bet as they spur and ride;
They're burning to stretch a gambler's hide,
But the high card tells me no.

Well, that's the way with 'em, wild or tame,
All trying to beat the gambler's game!
Three tombstones in a row.
They framed it to down me, three to one,
But a gambler's nerve and a gambler's gun . . .
We're giving the whole damn world a run,
June along—to Mexico!

IF THERE BE

By

GORDON YOUNG

For you must know, my Lord, since there be much courage in such wicked fellows as these, then are their lawless deeds near pardoned by gallant men—LETTER OF HENRY WARDELL.

CHAPTER I

HURRICANE WILLIAMS

GHORLAN, known as Red Ghorlan because of the great beard that spread from his face and fell on his chest like a bushy mask, walked with ponderous slowness, his crutch thumping, to the far side of the veranda which stood out over the steep hillside like a wide balcony. He was bulky, grotesque, crippled, often ferocious, at times moodily sullen; yet, when it pleased him, he could be agreeable and appear generous; but toward most people who came near him he had a way of brutal jeering. Natives were afraid of him, and even the house servants, though they liked stealing as much canned salmon and such food as would feed their relatives, tried to keep out of his way. Only his young daughter and her half Chinese companion seemed to know how to dodge the sharp edges of his temper; and if he was often irritable with them, he was also at times cheerful and kind.

He would swear even at Lele, the dainty little halfcaste, and strike his huge fist on the table, making a great rattle of dishes, if she brought coffee lukewarm, or the wrong bottle of wine; yet at other times he would sit motionless, with moody patience, an hour at a time, to keep from awakening her when she dozed during the heat of the afternoon.

Twenty years before his leg had been shortened at the knee by the rough surgery of Chinese, and this had made it hard for

COURAGE

Beginning a Novel of Hurricane Williams in the South Seas

him to get about; so, inactive, having a huge bony frame and being an enormous eater, he had grown ponderous and unwieldy.

About the year 1845 he and his Chinese, coming in a great ship much too big for its small crew, had arrived at Karnu, then uninhabited by white men. The ship disappeared—being furtively scuttled offshore one dark night by the Chinese. He and the Chinese, as a sort of gesture of explanation as to why they had come, then started a plantation. But the Chinese did not live together peaceably. They quarreled and fought. One Woo Lung, a tall, piratical fellow, the father of the pretty Lele, was either Ghorlan's friend or had the craftiness to seem so; and in some way that he never took the trouble to explain truthfully, he settled matters so that at last there were but a few Chinese left.

As long as Ghorlan's wife was living, Woo Lung and his friends, in a slightly sullen and very watchful way, jealously protected Ghorlan from contact with other white men, blackbirders, traders, pearlers. That is, they always stood by, never leaving him to talk with them alone. This woman seemed to have a peculiarly

strange influence over them, as over Ghorlan himself, who loved her almost humbly and with a kind of fierce admiration, as if she were a lovely gentle sorceress.

He had sold the plantation, practically giving it away to a lean, loose jointed, miserly Scotchman whom he soon detested; and, moving across the wide lagoon, he had built the big house, high on the steep hillside. Here, with his wary, half sullen Chinese about him, he had lived aloof and remote with his wife, now dead; with a daughter, now almost grown, and native house servants; together with a sickly, rather mysterious and—in appearance at least—almost witch-like European woman who was known vaguely as Aunt Lydia.

About a year ago his wife had died; shortly afterward the Chinese disappeared, supposedly drowned at sea while night fishing with natives in a big canoe. After that Ghorlan changed somewhat, as if loneliness had softened his brutal temper. He still did not want strangers about him, though he welcomed the officers of such visiting British gunboats as touched at the island; and he appeared to grow more affectionate toward his daughter, Raccla, and the little halfcaste who was treated quite as if she were Raccla's sister.

The truth is that Ghorlan, once a man of courage and famous for that courage, had his heart eaten out with twenty long years of unceasing fear; and secret shame darkened his days and nights. He suffered, knowing that if the world learned of him, who he was, what he had done, he would be thought a most fiendish brute, unpardonable and beyond the faintest touch of mercy.

He might wrathfully curse himself for such weakness—very like the tinglings of repentance; and stubbornly swear with eyes uplifted as if to God's face that he would do it all over again—which was perhaps true—yet the lurking shame never ceased from hurting. His wife, Rachella, whom he had loved and still loved with downright madness, was dead; the hoard of treasure got by one great, foully treacherous crime, being utterly useless to his needs, now seemed worthless.

Formerly he had looked at it, trying to gloat; but even as he smiled, wanting to feel pleased, down in his heart he knew that he would have tossed it all away with hasty eagerness to buy back the honor and the feeling of honor that were gone from him. He no longer wanted even to see the jewels, deeply buried under the house. Hazily, with vague flickers of half doubtful hope, he sometimes brooded over the thought of somehow buying some sort of pardon; yet he knew that there was not wealth enough under the sun to purchase the forgiveness of England's queen; and so he would swing back into a sullen, stubborn mood, clench his great jaws and with explosive thought tell the world to be damned for all he cared, and be damned himself, he would, before he gave up a pennyweight of treasure to any man!

Now this morning he let his eyes wander idly over the thick, jungle-like growth of the hillside, and to the seaward end of the lagoon, which opened with a deep and narrow channel edged with reefs. Rain had fallen during the night. The moist smell of fertile earth rose like incense.

GHORLAN turned as he heard a hasty patter of bare feet, and with a rustle of silk Raccla came breathlessly round the corner. Her voice, even in excitement, had a tinkling sweetness that seemed to have caught the echoes of her mother's tone, gay, soft, musical, with an allurement of kindliness. Men, strangers, such as traders, seeing Raccla's mother but once, knowing they would never see her again, had wanted to please her; and going away, ever afterward spoke of her with a strange feeling of respect.

"Father! Father—oh, there's a man—a white man—hurt on the beach! I saw him—he can't walk! They are bringing him. I told the boys to bring him!"

"Oh, he's drunk." Ghorlan flung up his hand as if striking off a fly. "From the plantation over there. You're silly, a fool

over anybody that's hurt. An' he's not hurt. He's drunk. I know those men over there."

Raccla was slender and straight, with hair as red as Ghorlan's own beard; and she had her mother's dark eyes. Beauty had touched her like a benediction. She had never been really frightened or even slightly punished in her life—for she minded her father's rough words not at all—and so she knew nothing of how to deceive; pretend one thing and feel another. And though she was spoiled, had a temper, and would scold her friends, usually the scolding broke off in laughter.

"But he *is* hurt! He is all cut and bleeding. And they *are* bringing him."

"Some fellow from the plantation. I don't want him up here. Damn blackguards, the lot of them!"

"But I asked him. He isn't from the plantation. He was on the beach down there, not in the lagoon."

"How'd he get there! There's been no ship. He is from the plantation."

"He said he swam ashore and—"

"He's a liar. Full of sharks out there."

"He isn't a liar!" Raccla stamped a bare foot. "And—oh, so cut and torn on the coral. He came in from the ocean. And the way he looks at you!"

Ghorlan leaned on his crutch and flourished his big arm.

"Raccla, go tell them to take him across to the plantation. They have a doctor. I don't want him here. He's one of their men. Some sort of rascal that's trying to get away. I won't have him up here."

And Raccla, having her way about it, exclaimed:

"But, father, he *is* here! So now!"

And as she turned, two strong native boys, breathing heavily from the steep climb, came slowly on to the veranda from the rear of the house. They had formed a seat of their hands and carried the man with his arms about their necks.

As they came near to Ghorlan and Raccla, the man said in the Samoan tongue, which the Karnusian natives understood:

"You have been kind. Put me down."

He held to the veranda rail with one hand and, though his feet and body were cut as if with dull knives, he stood erect and looked at Ghorlan.

Ghorlan, with increasing uneasiness, stared at him; a man well above the average size, naked to the waist with canvas trousers cut away at the knees. He looked like one who had been long in salt water, and blood was caked and trickling on his body. His face was darkly tanned with wind and sun, but there was a glint of blond color in his short uneven beard. He had lost blood; he was in pain, for the coral, like a tiger that has a man down, had cut and clawed him. But he stood erect; his face was firm, well shaped, intelligent, and his eyes held Ghorlan with a look at once questioning, challenging, and fearless.

Ghorlan in his day had been a famous soldier and adventurer in the Far East, a commander of men, courageous, robust, bold; and something in the presence of this man, though he stood half naked, empty handed, cut to shreds, helpless yet held up by more than physical strength, awakened in the red bearded giant the shadowy memories of gentlemen companions.

"Father, don't you see? He is hurt, and we must do something," said Raccla, staring with anxious pity, and her small hands moving as if trembling impatiently to be about some kindness.

She had seen few white men, except at a far distance, other than the visiting naval officers who came but seldom. Ghorlan's Chinese would never let beachcombers loiter about, or traders and such come unwatched. South Sea men gave Ghorlan's beach a wide berth.

"Where," Ghorlan asked suspiciously, deep in his throat, "where the hell did you come from?"

"The sea. Through the coral in the dark, with the tide. I went overboard out there, last night."

His tone, his words, his manner, something in his look—although he could hardly hold himself upright—made Ghorlan know that this man, for all of his nakedness and scarred, calloused hands,

was no mere sailor. There was something about him that struck deep into Ghorlan's feelings, making him a little uneasy and yet, even if unwillingly, interested and almost admiring.

"Overboard, eh? You fell overboard?" Ghorlan paused, but there was no answer. "How far out!"

"I don't know. I was in the water nearly all night."

"Why, you can't put a leg over a boat out there without having it torn off by sharks. What kind of a tale are you trying to give me?"

"The truth."

"Then you—who in hell are you?"

THE MAN, with a slight movement of his head, glanced behind him and saw the natives, mostly the women servants of the household, who had come out curiously. His glance in passing paused on Raccla's young face, aglow with the radiance of pity as if she too felt his pain; then he looked straight at Ghorlan, but said nothing.

"I asked—" Ghorlan raised his voice ominously— "who are you?"

The man came two steps nearer, leaving tracks of blood where he had stood, and again took hold of the veranda rail.

"This is Karnu and you are Ghorlan?"

"Yes."

His glance struck against Ghorlan's face with a look intense as anger, as if trying to search Ghorlan's thoughts, then he said in a low voice:

"If I do not tell the truth, you will know it—ask questions—bring men here to see me—or take me to the plantation. You'll find out somehow. I may as well have it over with. I am Hurricane Williams."

Raccla gasped, but her face brightened with amazement; and she said:

"So long, so much, I have heard of you. And, father, we can't—we simply can't let anybody know. They would hang him! And Dr. Butler—you have heard Dr. Butler say that scoundrels everywhere in the islands are more afraid of Hurricane Williams than of the *Astar* itself."

She leaned forward, peering, fascinated by this man and his name. Dr. Butler, who was very much of a favorite with Raccla, was the bald, stout, jolly surgeon of the gunboat *Astar*, which put in much of its time trying to find this same Hurricane Williams.

Ghorlan's first impulse was downright alarm that this South Sea outlaw, even torn and helpless, should be on his veranda. But Ghorlan's face, mostly hidden by the great spraying beard, showed nothing of what he felt, though his eyes widened in a questioning glare. Then, a moment later, in the way that contradictory impulses swept through Ghorlan, one after the other, he could have laughed—not at the man, but at his being called a pirate, and so widely searched for, simply because he had stolen a dozen or so dirty little schooners and killed a few men who were as lawless as himself. Pirate! Ghorlan grunted at the thought and asked:

"Well, then, what are you doing here? How did you *really* get here?"

"Some days ago I was at sea in a canoe with natives. Trying to make my way across the islands to where I have friends. We were sighted. Caught by a blackbirder. He knew me. Squared away for Sydney, wanting the reward. Last night at sea I got loose. Jumped overboard."

"You see, father, he did come in from the ocean and through the coral. And are we to be more cruel than sharks?"

Ghorlan paid no attention to what Raccla said, but looked searchingly at Williams, then asked with just the least trace of a sneer—

"What is the market price for your head now?"

"Father! Oh, how can you speak like that?"

"I do not know," said Williams, without interest. "Between two and three thousand pounds. So they said."

"Who caught you?"

"But, father, don't you see he can hardly stand? This is cruel!"

"Be quiet, Raccla— Who caught you?"

"Rolf Hazard."

Ghorlan almost roared.

"That damn dog! He's blackbirder for Hale—" Ghorlan pointed vaguely in the direction of the plantation. "It's a wonder he didn't kill you on sight."

It was well known how the blackbirders throughout the islands feared and hated Williams. He, speaking nearly all island languages, was the friend of even cannibals among whom scarcely another white dared venture, and he punished if he could men who kidnaped or mistreated blacks. Rolf Hazard was one of the old-timers—an evil, uncouth, drunken, murderous fellow who knew the islands as well as most men know the city in which they live.

"Not all the rewards say 'dead or alive'. Some are only for conviction. And—" Williams' eyes flashed but his voice remained low—"no doubt he wanted to drag me ashore at his heels, in irons, and have a sort of triumph on the waterfront."

Ghorlan glowered broodingly. He had a certain curiosity—a rather furtive feeling of sympathy, too, about this man; yet he was afraid of him and, through the long practise of secretive caution, distrustful. Strange stories were told of Williams, of incredible daring and swift, tricky escapes.

"Yes, but what can I do with you here?" Ghorlan said, as if asking the question aloud of himself.

"Let him rest and sleep, for he is tired and hurt," said Raccla.

"How keep you! Get myself into a mess. All the officers of the *Astar* are friends of mine."

"I have asked for nothing."

"You—" Ghorlan went on slowly, speaking deep in his throat, but without anger—"have killed men. Stolen ships. Are a damned outlaw and—"

"But he is so hurt, father!"

"And when a man's as much hunted as you are, there must be some good reason for it, eh?"

"Oh, but, father, he may die!"

Williams looked at her, and with a slow, assured shake of his head, said in low scorn:

"Die? No!"

It was almost as if he believed just that. Ghorlan understood this as a vague, oblique hint at the fact that Williams had once been hanged in the prison yards, pronounced dead, but hidden away by convicts detailed to bury him when they saw that life was not quite gone. He had any number of other escapes, surprising as miracles.

"Well, it's certain you can't stay here."

"Father!" Raccla cried in protest.

Then a new kind of look came into Williams' eyes, that seemed lighted with fever, intense, direct, like a physical force, as if the will to do whatever he wanted to do had blazed up and showed like flame in his eyes.

"Stand aside, Ghorlan, and I will go!"

"Why, you're half dead! And go? Go where?"

"Out there—" Williams' hand came away from the veranda rail in a thrusting gesture, seaward. "Where I always go, and am safe. To the sea. To cannibals. Among other men that will be hanged too, if caught."

He took a step forward as if to walk up against the huge body of Ghorlan and push it aside. Then he tottered, a dazed look came upon his face and he reached with fumbling blindness for the railing, missed it, and reeled like a man who had died on his feet.

Ghorlan grasped a veranda post with one hand, braced himself and, dropping the heavy crutch from under his arm, caught at Williams. Raccla, too, put her arms against him and called quickly to the servants.

"By God!" said Ghorlan with almost a shout. "I think I like this man! Sharks and cannibals, eh? You're right! To other men who will be hanged, too, if caught? Well, you are safe here!"

CHAPTER II

GHORLAN'S SECRET

THE NEXT day Ghorlan, as on every morning, sunshine or storm, was again walking up and down the veranda with a slow swing of his foot and the heavy thump of his crutch.

He glowered moodily, wondering what the devil he was going to do with that Hurricane Williams, now on a bed upstairs, helplessly swathed about with cloths. Varying impulses jerked at Ghorlan's irascible nature. One moment he felt that he did not want Williams near him, was a little afraid of him, and distrustful; the next he was scornful of his own uneasiness, was interested in the fellow, intensely curious and not at all afraid.

Lele, the halfcaste Chinese girl, carrying a large tray that was heavy with the weight of food and silver, came out with barefoot noiselessness.

Her face had a golden tint, her eyes a slight down tilted almond shape. She was the daughter of old Woo Lung, an ugly fiend of a man. But as with many of the Chinese halfcastes of the island, whatever their fathers may have been, she was pretty; and under a shadowy sort of shyness was alert, teasing, made the dark young natives quarrel foolishly and loved none of them.

Ghorlan had once lived long in China, knew the language, knew the people and liked them. His own wife had had a strain of the five clawed dragon's blood, though few people ever suspected that she was not wholly European.

Ghorlan, moving with heavy awkwardness, came up to the table where Lele was laying out the breakfast.

He stood with hand on the back of the broad chair, built especially for him, and eyed the dishes critically.

The service was of solid silver; but on each piece of the silver, knives, spoons and forks, as well as dishes and platters, there was a slight depression where some name or design had been patiently scoured away.

At times, not often, but once every three or four months, the coming of an ill tempered mood would begin by a period of sullen staring at this silver. Lele had noticed it, and Raccla too. At such a time he would sit for hours before the untasted food; and once, shortly after the death of his wife, he had flung food, dishes and all over the veranda. The servants searched for them, and they were afterward used again by Ghorlan who never referred to what he had done. These ugly moods would last for days. He would sit wrapped in sullenness, saying nothing, seeming to notice nothing. At other times he swore at the servants, broke things with a casual blow of his fist, flung his crutch at the frightened natives' heads . . .

Ghorlan knew that he was, or at least in the past had been, widely talked of: The Chinese, his beautiful wife, his morose seclusion, had given him an aspect of mystery. It was known, for the traders who brought out goods to him had loose tongues, that he kept a great supply of fine liquors and wines. And there, moored near the channel not far from the lagoon entrance, was his yacht-like schooner, never used these days, and rotting; but once she had been new, and cost money. And still, from a short distance, she looked a fine craft, much envied by traders who passed by. The traders also knew that Ghorlan had money with Sydney bankers since it was with orders on them that he paid for his supplies; and he paid without quibbling, generously.

"Well, Lele, how is our prisoner?" he asked with good humor.

"Ah, he is quiet if Raccla is with him. But if she leaves the room, though he does not open his eyes, he knows. He asks where she is!"

"Terrible fellow, Lele. Bad man. Kills people. Steals. Even sharks are afraid of him. And cannibals!"

Lele shuddered.

"I don't like cannibals!"

She had seen them now and then on the beach, or in the boats, under the guns of the plantation overseers.

"But he likes them, that fellow. Queer devil, don't you think?"

"All men, they are," she said with teasing smile.

"Devils, eh? How did you learn that?"

"Ooo-oo!" she answered gaily, with a hand to her breast. "I have little whispers that come here. Tell me many things."

"Hmm. What does the little whisper tell you of that fellow upstairs!"

"He is no bad man! If he asks, he says 'please'. If you do something, he say 'thank you'. And the coral it hurts so. Makes sores as if the devil's fingernails had scratched. Salt, salt, salt! All the time he say put salt on him where he is cut. Ooo! How it hurts! He does not say a word of pain. But you can see it in his eyes."

"I'll be up after awhile to see him again. But I think you're right at that. He is a man." Ghorlan glowered moodily, frowning at nothing. "But a rotten lot, men—some men." Then with an upward glance he surprised the staring look on Lele's face, and swept his hand at her. "Get away—get away. I want to eat in peace."

GHORLAN sat down. Though he did nothing more active than tramp about on the veranda for an hour or so a day, it seemed that he was always hungry. Eating and drinking were the only enjoyable pleasures left to him. He admitted the shame of it without mental evasiveness—he whose name had once been known for adventurous daring, now a slothful glutton.

Well, what of it, and why not? He had lived his life. Nothing remained of special interest except perhaps his daughter. In a hazy way he thought that something, sometime, must be done about Raccla. She ran about with native girls as if they were her sisters. Since the death of her lovely mother there was no one for her to be with excepting her father who was moody, and old Lydia who was crazy.

Old Lydia had once been the companion to Raccla's mother, but had grown sick and pious, avoided every one, stayed for days at a time in her dark, musty little cottage. Ghorlan had never liked her, yet for that reason he tried to be kind to her. She was helpless and forlorn, now surely out of her mind; but he could not forget that she had once, of her own free will, chosen to share his hazardous fortunes because she had loved Rachella, his wife.

His daughter, also Rachella but contracted to Raccla, could not go on living like a savage. Sometime he must find a suitable companion and send her away to Europe. Let her learn about the world. And some day marry. Lieutenant Osborn of the *Astar* was a gentlemanly young fellow, a bit of a prig and all that, but not bad. He couldn't keep his eyes off Raccla though she was still nothing but a child.

Ghorlan drank his coffee, pouring it with a luxurious air of self-indulgence from the massive silver coffee pot. It was black and strong.

He leaned back, coffee cup in hand, and gazed far out toward the sea-bound horizon. Yes, Raccla must marry some day. But not soon. He was too selfish to want to be left alone, and too disagreeable to want a son-in-law meddling with his household. Plenty of time for marriage. He wondered would any man ever love her as her mother had been loved? Throw over all else that made life worth while, commit crimes and be unrepentant? It had been worth all that and more—everything; but only because he had never seen the glimmer of regret on her lovely face. She had made him feel that she would have had nothing changed, and he loved her memory with a profound and conscious gratitude.

Ghorlan heard voices on the winding pathway of coral rock steps that led from the lagoon beach up to the front of the veranda. He put his head to one side attentively. White men's tones. He recognized with exasperation that one was the shrill, rasping, half whine of that Scotchman Hale from the plantation. The fellow rarely came, but too often at that.

The men paused at the steps of the veranda, Hale and his blackbirder, Rolf Hazard.

Ghorlan settled back sullenly in his chair.

Hale was a lanky, thin faced man, shrewd in his bargains, by no means honest, cruel to his blacks. Somehow he had got the idea that an air of jovial heartiness might make people think the better of him.

Hazard was a rather old man, broad and short, and it was said that the nearest he ever came to a bath was at such times as he had fallen overboard. His graying beard was colored with tobacco, for he smoked and chewed at the same time, pausing perhaps to eat, but often went to sleep with a quid in his jaws.

" 'Lo, Ghorlan," said Hazard a little surlily; and without being invited put himself into the nearest chair and eyed the breakfast things.

"How d'ye do, Meester Ghorlan," said Hale, bowing and grinning. His lanky body took on various angles as he eased himself into a chair and hunched himself over with elbows on his knees, glancing expectantly toward Hazard.

"Well, Ghorlan," Hazard began, then paused to spit over the veranda rail and when he turned glowered for a moment by way of emphasis, "I want my pris'ner. Williams—he's here; an' he's mine. An' I'll have 'im! Hear?"

"An' you won't!" Ghorlan shouted back and smote the table with a fist like a mallet.

"The captain, here," said Hale, showing his teeth in an effort to be pleasant, "captured Williams and—"

"Couldn't keep him," Ghorlan finished. "I can!"

"Whaled the irons over my mate's head. Got the key. Unlocked his wrists with his teeth. Tore a piece o' plankin' out of the bunk, laid out two more o' my men an' in another five minutes would 've had the ship but that me an' a couple more come up with muskets an' he went overboard in the dark. I thought he was done for till I stopped in here to see Hale, an' we heard you had 'im. I want 'im."

"So do I," said Ghorlan. "Three thousand pounds! What do you think? That I'll hand it over to you two? Just because I gave Hale that plantation for a song an' dance, you needn't think I give away everything."

"I want in on that money," said Hazard. "You hear?"

"From what I hear, you want in on any kind of dirty work that has money in it," said Ghorlan.

"You bein' insultin'?"

"No. Informative."

"You'd never 've got 'im but for me, an' what I done," said Hazard, trying to argue. "I got the right to a whack."

"An' you," Ghorlan growled, "would never have got him but for the prison doctor that said he was dead when they hanged him some time back. Going to hunt the doctor, were you, an' give him a share out of the reward?"

"Ah, but Meester Ghorlan," said Hale, spreading his bony hands in a vague, soothing gesture, "this is different."

"An' the difference is you couldn't keep him. I can. I'll keep him till the *Astar* comes. I don't share that reward with anybody."

"You give him to me, Ghorlan," said Hazard, with a coaxing note in his harsh voice. "We'll split. I'll get him right away into Sydney. The *Astar* may not come for two months, or longer. He'll get away. Mark me, he'll get away from you too!"

"An' you'd get away with the reward, too."

"You wouldn't trust me?" cried Hazard, swelling indignantly.

"Move your chair to that railing if you are going to chew tobacco up here. An' no, I wouldn't trust you. Neither of you. Not with a damn penny!" Ghorlan glowered, feeling a vague satisfaction in bullying this bully.

Hazard and Hale were exchanging rather blank glances when Lele came out to take away the tray.

Ghorlan sat back with head lifted and beard bristling.

"Ask her," said Ghorlan, gesturing with a thumb. "We've got Williams in irons. Hands an' feet. Keys right here—" he slapped his own pocket.

HAZARD stared at her, and she quickly turned her face away from the blowsy old seaman's admiring gaze.

"By God, Ghorlan, you keep nice lookin' girls, don't you?"

"I keep them looking nice too. Don't bash them over the head, or break their ribs."

"Captain Hazard is the victim of evil reports," said Hale, with a sidelong leer toward the pretty Lele.

"The devil says the same of himself," Ghorlan growled.

"Well, I want to have a look at that Williams. Ask 'im a question or two."

"No."

"No? Why not?"

"Well, why should I? He's *my* prisoner. If I came on board your ship an' went meddling about, you'd tell me to go to hell, wouldn't you? That's what I'm telling you—both of you—go to hell." Ghorlan waved his arm as if to send them off and spoke with savage jeering.

"Aw right, Ghorlan. Aw right. So much the worse for you," Hazard said sourly, taking the quid into his fingers and flinging it away. "Some day you may be whistlin' another tune. Yes, sir-ree! It's not ever' man that don't give a damn whether he's friends with ol' Cap Hazard!"

Captain Hazard took a hunk of "niggerhead" from a hip pocket, brushed at the dirt, poked the tobacco far into his mouth and bit down, tugging and gnawing. Then with his bearded jaw distended as if a walnut were there, went on:

"Me an' Hale here, we come up like gentlemen to—" He stopped, his eyes following Lele as she went indoors; then, "How much for the chink girl?"

Ghorlan eyed him from his unwashed ears to his boots, cut away at the toes to ease bunions.

"Flesh an' money, like a butcher! You blasted slaver!"

Hazard spit, then winked toward Hale.

"Oh, I un'erstand, Ghorlan!"

Hale spoke up in a soothing tone.

"Was Williams very bad cut on the coral?"

"No. Scratched a bit. That's all."

"How'd you ever catch 'im then? Get 'im in irons? Took six of us to do it—an' a belayin' pin."

"He was tired; worn out; starved. Pretty weak. Went to sleep an' woke up double ironed. And all the reward that is got out of him goes into my pocket."

"Well, I made somethin' out of 'im," said Hazard, spreading his elbows and poking his thumbs under his arm pits. "I picked up six niggers with 'im. Big fine bucks. One a reg'lar giant. Sold 'em to Hale here."

"Well," said Ghorlan contemptuously, with disgust, "I wish you luck with that kind o' money."

"Oh, there's worse ways. Only I wish now I'd killed Williams. He's done a lot o' harm to friends o' mine. If I ever get a chance at 'im again I'll take 'im to Sydney pickled in a salt barrel. He won't get out o' that."

"He got out of a hangman's noose."

"Yes," Hale spoke up. "They say a woman killed a man and accused him. They say Williams used to be a very rich young gentleman. They say that now he is crazy and—"

"I'll tell you he's crazy," said Hazard. "Jump overboard ten mile 'r more at sea after tryin' to take my ship. If he'd ever got them niggers loose—well, I'd 've been to wherever it is I'm goin' when I die."

"Is there any doubt as to that?" Ghorlan inquired.

"There 'll be some more there. No lack o' company, Ghorlan. An' by the way, where the hell did you come from, down into these islands?"

Ghorlan, without a moment's pause, said—

"China."

"Where's your pack o' Chinamen? Hale here says they're gone off."

"Does he? They haven't gone far." Ghorlan lied convincingly.

"Ain't you goin' serve some liquor 'r something? You've got no spirit o' hospi—" Hazard swore, startled. "Who the hell's that?"

Ghorlan, with a twist of his body, looked over his shoulder as a pale, gaunt, mere shadow of a sickly woman, with her head wrapped about in black, drew back from the corner of the veranda around which she had been peering.

"Old Lydia," said Hale with a smirk, pleased to show that he had certain bits of information about Ghorlan's household.

"Looks like a damned ghost," said Hazard.

"She is. Just that. A ghost. Dead as you'll be—some day," Ghorlan answered, and by his look seemed to indicate that he would not be in the least displeased to learn of Hazard's death, any day.

"Aw, come on, Hale," said Hazard, rising. "Let's up anchor. Ghorlan here don't like our comp'ny. An' you won't whack with that reward, eh?"

"Not if it was to buy my soul out of hell."

"Well, you'll wish you had, Ghorlan, if ever I get a chance at you. You ain't no gentleman. We come up here to talk— Aw, come on, Hale. We ain't enough like naval off'cers for to suit him."

Hale bowed, trying to show that he was not offended, and with a "Good day, Meester Ghorlan," went away.

Ghorlan sat for a time brooding, with a hand claw-like and motionless in his beard. Was he, for all he had done, as foul a creature as this blowzy Hazard, as evil as this bony Hale? He nodded, not admitting the answer, but thinking that stern justice would hang him in chains for the contempt and scorn of all men, yet let Hale and Hazard strut about the streets.

Presently he lifted his crutch and struck at a brass gong. The gong answered with reverberant, bell-like sound. A young native boy came running.

"Get a bucket," said Ghorlan in the native tongue, which he understood better than he spoke. "A pig was here. Wash the veranda."

With the end of his crutch he pointed to where Rolf Hazard had sat, chewing tobacco.

GHORLAN found it rather a struggle to climb or descend stairs, he being a huge man and crippled; but now he labored sluggishly up the steps. He paused two or three times to wipe his forehead; then, with a lumbering sway of his body, he went on. Raccla, having heard him, stood with the door open.

Williams, wrapped about with bandages, for coral scratches are often poisonous, sat up. His hair was combed and brushed; Raccla had combed and brushed it. His beard was trimmed; Raccla had trimmed it.

She had quite the feeling that Williams belonged to her, at least to her care. He, not knowing how little she had of fear for any one, thought it strange that she was not in the least afraid of him.

There was no chair in the room big enough for Ghorlan, so, ponderously, he came to rest on an old sea chest and leaned against the wall.

"You look better," he said.

"Much."

Ghorlan nodded with an affectionate glance toward his daughter.

"Tender hearted. Mother was the same. I'm not. You do look better."

"My feet are cut. Otherwise I could be up and about."

"May have to be sooner than you want." Ghorlan's voice rumbled deep in his throat. "Damn natives have talked. Had visitors this morning. The pious Mr. Hale, an' the not so pious Captain Hazard. Unh."

Ghorlan stroked his beard with a slow pull of his fingers.

"Wanted what they call a whack in the reward. I'd see myself in hell before I'd give a sick dog to 'em." He growled with deepening anger, "Asked the price of Lele—his dirty hands on that bit of living porcelain! I'd sell Raccla as quick!"

"He sold my boys to the planter?"

Ghorlan nodded.

"Then when I go, I take them," said Williams.

"No chance. Guarded like prisoners. Are prisoners. Work under guns."

"Ghorlan, no man that's ever sailed with me, black or white, can say I scuttled him. I'll get them off if I have to bring a shipload of raiders from the Solomons to do it."

"Unh." Ghorlan peered from under lowered lids. "Even niggers?"

"Men!" Williams snapped.

Ghorlan grunted.

"I know how you feel. Though I never felt it—about niggers. I told Hazard I'd keep you till the *Astar* came this way. May come any day—or not for months. Can't tell. Those friends of yours we've heard about—what's his name? Brundage? An' that other one, the Spanish chap—Francisco? They are not where you can get word to 'em?"

Williams shook his head. There was the merest hint of distrust in his silent reply.

"Hmm. Hazard said you'd get away from me. Seems like you do, somehow, always, eh?"

Ghorlan leaned forward with both hands about the heavy crutch and asked:

"Wonder if you'd tell me something? We've all heard your story—how you were hanged, didn't die, got away an' —well, here you are. It's hard, your kind of life. An' you've been—well—a gentleman. You've cleaned up some pretty rich pearl beds at times. So it's said. Why haven't you taken the money? Gone away? Lived at ease? Your kind of life—you can't like it. Look at you now. Cut to shreds. Why not, say, South America?"

"The best of it, Ghorlan, is phantoms and trifles. Men reach out for shadows—all shadows. And never know it till they get what they reach for. In the end you shut your eyes and go down into darkness. Then, what's happened before—what does it matter? I don't know, nor do you. Nor any man. I'm into it, like a ship in a storm—and can't go about. There's more storms in a man's heart than ever on the face of the sea. You know it. And they drive a man, like wind and tide."

Ghorlan closed his eyes, leaned back against the wall and repeated unhappily, in a slow, droning tone—

"Never know it till they get what they reach for . . . "

SOME days later Ghorlan, massive, almost misshapen in his ponderous bulk, leaned on his forearm and gazed at the chess board.

Lele and Raccla, not very well understanding this intricate game, did however very well understand that Ghorlan was in an ugly mood. They had their pretty faces cheek to cheek and looked on with puzzled uneasiness.

Ghorlan was a good player, but Williams in haphazard audacity let pieces be taken or flung them away; then, with raider-like swiftness and unexpected moves, broke through elaborate defenses and began the monotonous check, check, check, that ended in checkmate.

"That ends it!" said Ghorlan angrily. "You're the worst player and the surest winner I ever saw." As if demanding the secret, "How do you do it?"

"I play that I'm playing for my life."

Ghorlan nodded. As he looked into the face of this man that did seem an explanation. He growled with returning good humor:

"I don't want your damn life. But playing against you makes me feel as if I'd walked a mile uphill. I'm going to lie down—have a sleep. Then look out."

He arose with a struggling heave, ran his hand into his beard, stood for a moment gazing at the pieces; then with sluggish awkwardness he walked around the veranda to his room.

Raccla and Lele pounced on the pieces, set them up, began to move. They barely knew the moves, and with playful frittering bungled ineptly, but had fun.

Their game broke up in a hasty popping of pieces about the board, each claiming victory; and the gentle tussle of their fingers lawlessly knocked over the ivory puppets, as women's pretty fingers knock puppets about over the face of the earth. With lilting sounds, now in the native tongue, now in English, they playfully wrangled, appealing to Williams' decision.

Soon they gave it up, and huddled down together on a wide veranda couch, piled high with soft mats. They chattered for a time like drowsy parrakeets, then dozed.

Williams stood up and, taking the lacquered cane, moved noiselessly on bandaged feet and went nearer. A kind of smothering emotion tugged at his throat and for a long time he looked down at them. With a slow, cautious movement he put out his hand and touched Raccla's loose hair. Her eyes popped open. She smiled sleepily, then her eyelids drooped, and with a drowsy snuggle she pressed more closely to Lele.

An hour later Williams was sitting on the seaward railing of the veranda looking out across the ocean when he heard the soft scrape of an unsteady, stealthy foot on the mat. He turned.

Some distance away stood a haggard, corpse-like woman, with her head wrapped about in black. Except for the fever brightness of her eyes she looked like one who had been dead for days.

As he turned she hesitated, then she let her long, dark skirts fall and raised a bony hand to her lips, glancing about timidly, making sure she was not watched.

She beckoned, whispering insistently:

"Come! Come! I must talk to you!"

As Williams did not move she, cautiously tiptoeing, came a little nearer, beckoning still.

"I must talk to you."

"What do you want?"

"To warn you about—" her low tone dropped to a whisper— "him!"

With sly furtiveness she glanced from side to side, again beckoned, and turned as if to go away but watched to see if he would follow.

Williams, with crippled slowness, walked toward her. She turned and went ahead, glancing backward like a stealthy sybil seeking some dark place suitable for the unfolding of tragic secrets.

She left the veranda, and a hundred feet farther along the narrow graveled path of the hillside came to a small house. Opening the door, she stood within the darkened room, beckoning.

"Who are you?" Williams asked.

"Lydia—old Lydia." She grinned in a way that, together with the fever gleam in her dark eyes, made him sure that she was half mad, or more, and, in a furtive, fear struck way, cunning. "I know everything about—" again her voice was hushed into the lowest of confidential whispers— "him."

She closed the door and they stood in shadows. This startling old woman seemed to want no sunlight about her. It became more and more apparent that she was out of her mind.

Her speech was erratic and broken; her thoughts jumped with a zig-zag abruptness, and she hurried breathlessly, half weeping.

"Wicked woman—" a claw-like hand scratched at her own breast, penitently. "God—me—punished. The silver—all rubbed away. You can see. No hope—heaven—for me unless—not Ghorlan; Morland! His name is Morland. Must be punished. He killed—killed for jewels and for her, that woman. England—I want to die in England—be buried in England. God will never forgive me unless he is punished. . . "

She was tainted with religious madness. She told that often she had tried to get

some one of Ghorlan's few guests alone; but none had ever stayed longer than a few hours on the veranda and were not left alone.

She apparently did not know who Williams was. His name, if she had heard it, meant nothing to her; but a quirk in her madness made her hope for heaven if she could betray Colonel Henry Morland who, with his Chinese, twenty years before had seized the *Anne of Southern*, homeward bound from India, with a great collection of jewels.

In her madness there was the sly temptation of treasure.

"I have seen it!" she said, peering up like an evil temptress. "He has it, here. Hidden. The Chinamen are dead now. Drowned—or he killed them. He will kill me, too! Jewels this big—" She shook her bony fist.

Williams caught at her arm, held her, then with a look that struck through her madness:

"Never speak of this to any one again! You have told me. Tell no one. Do you hear?"

Old Lydia pulled back, frightened. His look was fierce; his grip on her arm hurt. She sank into a chair; but presently, muttering in a kind of hysterical joy, said:

"You—I can see you will punish him! And be good to me—" she bargained with childish insistence— "to England, me? And some of the jewels—me, to me?"

WILLIAMS returned to the veranda. Raccla and Lele, huddled together affectionately, were still asleep. All the servants about the house were taking their noonday doze. From the open door of Ghorlan's room came the sound of heavy breathing.

With the slow step of crippled feet, Williams went into the house, to the great cupboard that filled half the width of a wall where there was liquor and where the silver was put away. He lifted down the huge coffee pot, turning it about. There was a deep depression where something had been rubbed away. He looked at other pieces of the solid silver. All bore the same effacement.

Ghorlan came from his room, a drowsy giant of a man, with sleep still in his eyes and yawns stretching his mouth.

Williams was sitting against a post on the railing, staring seaward.

"Like the frigate bird, eh? Watching the sea—ready to pounce," said Ghorlan, and yawned. "Come along. I like a little dry wine after I've had a sleep."

They went into the house, into the big room where the silver stood high on its shelves. Ghorlan searched about until he found a long necked bottle of German wine and took two silver goblets. They sat down. The crystalline gurgle of the wine was like water bubbling from a mountain spring.

"Have to watch these natives," said Ghorlan. "They like wine too. Old Woo Lung used to do the watching for me—peace be to his soul. If the Bible's right, he's in hell."

"He's the one who was Lele's father?"

"And now she is Lord High Keeper of the Cellarage, an' cupbearer."

"Those Chinamen, Ghorlan—I believe you told me they were drowned?"

"Went fishing one night with natives, yes. Never came back. No storm. Canoe leaked, I suppose. An' sharks. I'd rather have lost my other leg."

"They liked fishing? Went out often, did they?" Williams inquired.

"No. An' I wish they hadn't gone this time. I miss those yellow devils. These natives here are the biggest cowards on earth. One of the blacks—a fuzzy-headed one—bolted from the plantation once. Got across here. The whole village down there was in a panic. They shot him."

"The natives?"

"No. Hale's overseers."

Williams scarcely tasted the wine. Ghorlan drained the bottle and opened another.

"What sort was Woo Lung?" Williams inquired.

Ghorlan laughed.

"Lean old murderous devil. But I'd have taken the heart out of my body an' given it to him to keep! Had a knife scar from here—" Ghorlan put a forefinger to his temple and drew it slantwise past an eye's corner down along his cheek— "to here. Made him look one eyed, but he wasn't."

Williams stared without answer or movement, but scarcely listened as Ghorlan said:

"Knew him for years an' years—" When Williams' close attention came back to Ghorlan he heard, "Woo Lung's fathers an' forefathers had been the servants of my wife's family. They liked me, yes. But they half worshiped her; or, more than half—they did. She was a royal woman."

At that Ghorlan fell silent; and presently when he stirred Williams, for no apparent reason, asked—

"Did you ever hear of the Ponleas?"

"No. What of them?"

"A little half barren group of wild atolls, not a thousand miles from here. I've been there a few times, after pearls. One reason I am here now is because I was there not long ago. Found a half dozen men shipwrecked. They did not look quite human. Tried to bargain with me to take them to Sydney or Apia—anywhere. I wouldn't, of course. But meant, of course, to put them in the way of getting to wherever they wanted to go. Took them on board and touched at—never mind the name. I go there frequently. Not many people do, not on the windward side at any rate, though there's usually a trader or two on the leeward. With mountains in between and unfriendly natives. One day when I was ashore these castaways of mine tried to make off with my schooner. Put her on the rocks. So there I was, stranded. So were they, stranded. I left them—same as marooned. Natives may or may not kill them. I didn't do it because, well—" Williams smiled slightly— "would look a little out of place for me to exact too severe a punishment on men for trying to make off with a ship I myself had stolen! I could have gone across the mountains and found another. They can't, those fellows. But instead I took a big canoe, my blacks, and made off. Hazard overhauled me at sea. And here I am."

"You do have a rough time of it, don't you?"

"They're in for a worse, those castaways. One is a trader. The others—"

Williams looked at Ghorlan with enigmatic steadiness, wondering whether or not to say the other castaways were Chinese, one of whom had a knife's mark from temple almost to chin's tip —a long, lean, yellow, murderous looking fellow, scarred as if branded on the face, whose name was Woo Lung!

"Well," said Ghorlan, lifting his goblet, "here's hoping cannibals eat 'em, those fellows! Wine tastes better out of silver than glass, don't you think?"

"Ghorlan, you asked me a question—why I stayed down in these islands. Why do you? With a girl like that? And her future? And the wealth you must have to live as you do?"

"I'm comfortable," said Ghorlan quickly, his voice loud with emphasis. "Like it here. It is a little lonely at times, but now an' then somebody comes. Officers of the *Astar* always stop ashore for a little visit."

"Just you and Raccla? No other white person?"

"There's old Lydia. Haven't you seen her yet? She's always peering around corners at people. A little crazy. More than that—a harmless lunatic. She was a kind of companion to my wife. That's why I'd do almost anything for her. Even promised to bury her in England, since that seems to be what she wants. That, an' getting into heaven."

"But Raccla?" Williams insisted. "You aren't immortal and if—well, what then? A girl like that alone with natives —worse than natives. . . "

"Some day, of course; yes, certainly. Do something. You'd never guess it, but there is a faint trickle of the Chinese in Raccla. Nobody ever guessed

it in her mother—though everybody knew she was unlike other women. Much as sun warmth is unlike candle light. I was in China a long, long time. Knew the people well enough to know that a certain kind of Chinese blood is a fine thing. Look at Lele. Halfcaste, an' splendid—though one half is nothing but common native. An'—" Ghorlan spoke with rising excitement; he brought his huge fist down on the table, making the goblets jump and wine spill— "there was never a lovelier woman this side of heaven than Raccla's mother! Seventeen years—an' I a cripple.

"I tell you, by God, Williams, they can put me in the deepest hole of hell, an' I'll still say it was worth it, all of it—to live with her for seventeen years."

He was breathing heavily. He groped for the wine cup, drank without noticing what he was doing, and said:

"Perhaps now you can guess why I'm here. I took her from another man. An old man. A fool, all covered with—hmm!—decorations an' such tawdry truck. He had no more right to a woman like that than I have to the throne of Spain. We came here; she's dead. I've stayed on an' on. These are the boards she walked over. The doors she passed through. That's the sea she looked at. Nothing else matters. That's the way I feel about it. Damn me—" again the mighty fist smashed the table—"I loved her. I still love her. She was worthy of it, all of it—an' more!"

He tipped up the second bottle of wine. It was empty. Ghorlan turned about and gropingly reached down into the cupboard for another.

CHAPTER III

THE GETAWAY

GHORLAN had been up all night and since dawn had stood at the corner of the veranda with his telescope, staring in every seaward direction. All through the moonlight of the night he had watched, and after midnight hastily awakened Lele and Raccla. The three of them hung over the railing, peering afar in the dim light at a shadow, ghost-like schooner that, with the sigh of the night's land breeze in its sails, was creeping seaward: Hurricane Williams was making off with another ship and, there being lawless blood in all their veins, they chattered and babbled, wishing him luck.

At dawn Ghorlan had begun to search for some seaward speck, but the ghost-like schooner had vanished. Yet Ghorlan could not sit down. He was waiting. The girls, having gone to their beds weary and excited, would sleep late.

A sluggish native woman came with the heavy tray and laid out Ghorlan's breakfast. He drank coffee standing, but did not eat. His mouth was dry and burned from the numerous cigars smoked through the night.

From where he stood at the corner of the veranda he saw a boat being rapidly rowed from the direction of the plantation. He laughed, watching the boat ground, watching a tall, angular man jump into the ankle deep water and make for the winding, steep pathway, laid with steps of coral limestone, that came through dense shrubbery up to the hill-side house.

Ghorlan sat down, chuckled, stroked his beard and reached for another cigar.

Hale the planter came puffing, his face distorted almost tearfully—as if ready to cry but too much out of breath. He looked haggard, chilled; his clothes were wet and dirty. He waved a scrawny arm and bony fist:

"Why didna ye send word an' gi' me warnin'! Why didna ye warn me he ha' got loose!"

"Then you've caught him?" Ghorlan bellowed. "Good! Good! You've caught him!"

Groans almost choked Hale.

" 'Tis God's mercy I'm not a mur-r-dered man this mornin'! My schooner—gone! My blacks—gone!"

"An' my three thousands pounds reward—gone!" Ghorlan echoed. "See

for yourself, I can't eat my breakfast. But tell me—what happened? Sit down, Hale. Have a cigar? Coffee? A little brandy? Why didn't you catch him?"

"Ye should ha' let Hazard take him. Noo ye ha' lost a'! An' my schooner—why didna he take yours?"

"Three fathoms of sea grass on the bottom. Rigging rotten. Have a wee nip, Hale. An' tell me—what happened? Cigar? Coffee?"

Hale took the cigar, the coffee, and thought a wee nip of brandy might do him good. Ghorlan touched a gong. The sluggish native woman brought brandy. Hale's wee nip was almost a half pint.

Hale said that it must have been about ten o'clock the night before, and he was working late over his books, when he heard a faint tearing sound and looked up as a man who had slit the netting of his door from top to bottom, stepped through, knife in hand.

Hale, rising up in amazed fright, dropped the inky pen on his neat ledger. He opened his lean jaws in a noiseless gasp. His head overseer and storekeeper were playing at cards in the next room, at cribbage, and the rumble of their counting could be heard. Yet with this man's eyes upon him, Hale was afraid to cry out.

"I am Williams. No sound out of you. The blacks you bought of Hazard—I've come for them."

The tone was low, but had power behind it, and menace. The steady, mask-like intensity of the man's face, of his eyes, hypnotically fierce and unwavering, made the sinews of Hale's knees waggle like loose fiddle strings.

Hale worked his jaw a few times as if it were a pump handle, but no words would come.

"Come along—"

"W-what?"

"Come with me. No noise about it."

"Y-yes."

Hale's hat, coat and gun were hanging on pegs behind him. He thought of snatching at the gun, but Williams stood too near, knife in hand. With an almost mechanical reach, scarcely thinking, Hale took his hat.

Williams then reached up for the gun belt and without a word strapped it about his waist. He put a hand on Hale's arm and marched him to the door, unlatched it and they stepped through, closing it quietly.

It was rather a walk to the native quarters and, though the moon was up, the shadows were thick. Insects and lizards were creaking and squeaking. The land breeze rustled the palms as if shaking them into wakefulness.

Hale, with Williams' hand on his arm, marched along, feeling sick. He thought of jerking loose and darting down some shadowy path; but other thoughts made him feel too weak to try. The dogs that were staked out about the native barracks began to bark.

"Shut them up," said Williams.

Hale remembered very well in which shed those strapping big Solomon Islanders he had bought from Hazard were quartered. At the dark doorway he stopped.

"In there," he said nervously.

Williams called out. For a moment there was silence.

He called again, and a voice answered shrilly, with incredulous intonation.

Williams said something in a strange language, and babel broke loose. There was a floundering of bodies in the darkness as men tumbled from their shelf-like bunks. He spoke again. This time his voice was loud, and his shout went through the excited yelping like a trumpet blast. The yelping stopped, but the hum and click of voices was like the frothing roll of waves over a shingle beach.

There was a stormy patter of feet, a surging of bodies, as every black in the room struggled to the doorway, excited and curious. All wanted, and some tried, to go with Williams; but he took only his own men, who leaped, waving their arms, jabbering like fiends.

ONE OF THESE was a gigantic black who seemed the larger, or rather the taller, because of his upstanding mop of hair. He, an untamable brute, had been many times under the lash. And as they marched off—Hale was not asked to show the way now; the blacks knew it—with clicking gutturals and angered gestures he told Williams of the punishment, gnashing his teeth at Hale, wanting his head.

Hale's angular knees wobbled and his teeth chattered as if with malaria. Other blacks had their hands on Hale and hustled him along at a lively clip.

They came out of the shadows on the beach in the moonlight, near a kind of wharf to which a boat was tied; but the oars had been taken away so that no escaping black could make use of it.

"Who is there?" Williams pointed to Hale's schooner.

"Oh," said Hale with cunning, though he shivered. "Four white men an' eight natives."

"Too many—else I'd have you hail her and tell them to send a boat. We'll have to swim for it."

"But the sharks!"

Hale gasped; then, with an agonized protest, he denied his false information. The blacks were dragging him into the water, and there were sharks! He now whimpered that there were only three or four natives out there; that he could not swim; that he would hail the schooner.

His words of protest ended in a smothered squawk as his head went under water.

Williams took the gun he carried into his left hand, held it above the water. The noiseless swimmers who first reached the schooner hung under the shadow on the starboard main channel until Hale, dragged by the hair, was pulled alongside.

They went scrambling up and over the bulwarks, leaving Hale to follow, sink or start back for the beach. He was half drowned, but thought to make back shoreward; yet such was his dread of sharks, which often swarmed into the lagoon, that he climbed up until his long legs were safely out the water; then peering over the bulwarks, he saw dark shapes, glistening with water, scurrying about, searching.

They snatched up belaying pins, seized upon knives in the galley and, with a jubilant rush, went through the ship.

Williams, as soon as the three natives and the halfcaste of the crew were mustered, looked for Hale and pulled him inboard; then set the men to work getting up the anchor and making sail. He worked rapidly, cheering the men, speaking almost good-naturedly; and when the anchor was aweigh he took the wheel. The schooner glided like a feather over a mill pond, slowly, steadily.

A boat was trailing astern. Presently Williams had it drawn alongside, told Hale to get into it, then sent down the three natives and the halfcaste, turning them adrift without a word and with only one oar. They would have to labor at sculling against the tide to get ashore.

Williams' blacks, half raw savages, were willing enough but not good sailors, being born to a paddle's handle and unused to rope. He worked with them, led and showed them with the patience of a gentleman training dogs.

Night and day he took his brief sleep about the deck within a hand's reach of Barai, the gigantic black, who shook him into wakefulness at any shift of wind or gathering of clouds. Always he arose instantly alert, as if sleep fell from him like a garment. The blacks had a dog-like faith in Williams, and something of a dog's affection too.

One night with the wind's shoulder in the *Glasgow's* sails and the clear night's stars burning and flickering like tiny torches, wind whipped, Williams turned to the giant Barai, war chief of a cannibal tribe and said in the native tongue, which did not very well lend itself to talk of the kind—

"Barai, if you go on a raid—canoe raid

—and are wounded, left on the beach, and a strange man finds you?"

"He kill me," said Barai with the promptness of a child answering an easy question.

"But if he does not kill you, and if—"

"He big fool!"

"—And if he cures your wounds and lets you go. And you go; and you know that this man has much wealth and no strength, yet he has been good to you—what then?"

Barai grunted and made strange sounds.

"You big fool talk such words. Strange man he kill me. He be big fool, no kill me; me no be big fool—me kill *him!*"

Williams tapped his own breast.

"I lie and sleep. You stand by with the knife. You do not kill me, the stranger. Why?"

"We are brothers," said Barai solemnly, putting out his hand in the ritual of white man's fashion, wanting renewed confirmation after such puzzling talk.

Williams took his hand, saying as well as the native's tongue lent itself to such conceptions:

"Just so, Barai. When the stranger heals your wounds, gives you food, kindness, whoever he is, whatever his wickedness, he has become a brother."

He turned his face, looking backward, staring into the wind that blew with strong, steady breath. His eyes went out along the white, sizzling wake of the schooner and peered at the black water, far behind.

His hand unconsciously fingered a small, slender, lumpy package, no thicker than the finger of a glove, stitched inside the waistband of the trousers that belonged to the suit Ghorlan had had a native buy from the plantation store. In secret Williams had ripped the old short canvas trousers in which he had been cast ashore, and replaced the little package here. Thus he carried pearls, all that were left to him of those he had gathered from much plucking of oyster beds near and far throughout the South Seas. These had been honestly come by, brought up by natives well paid for their diving.

CHAPTER IV

HARRISON

WILLIAMS headed first for New Georgia, to a lagoon village—Barai's—much used as a rendezvous, since it was remote and rarely visited by white men; but its people having been helped in tribal warfare by Williams, they gave him and his friends welcome. Now he found that Brundage and Francisco were away in the pearler; where, no one knew, or when their return. He left a note saying that if they returned before the new moon they were to come to Pitman Bay at Waklea.

Barai and his companions having told their fellow villagers tall stories of Williams' prowess, and of the escape from Hale's plantation, other men too offered themselves as his sailors; and he chose some four or five wild, strong fellows, gave them rifles, and with patience—mixed with much sarcasm—drilled them.

He returned to the windward rock bound shores of Waklea for two reasons: and either would have drawn him. Five Chinese, one lean and darkly yellow with a deeply scarred cheek, and the burly trader, Harrison, had been left there, marooned after wrecking Williams' ship in which they had tried unskilfully to make off. If these were Ghorlan's Chinese, why had they left him, and in such a way as to make it appear that they were drowned while night fishing? There was but one answer, and easily guessed. They had taken away with them something that Ghorlan did not yet know was missing.

Williams would have returned anyhow, for there was the wrecked ship, with much salvage if it had not been burned by the natives; anchors and iron, anyway.

The *Glasgow* lay well offshore, waiting for the tide.

Barai grunted, pointing. He stared at the black speck that, like a water bug with paddle legs stroking the water, was coming out of the far-off bay.

Williams picked up the telescope and presently put it by.

"Fight?" Barai asked, with jagged teeth set in a dog's eager grin.

He and his fellows liked fighting under Williams and believed in his *mana*, which is greater than mere magic. And they were aggressively proud that all weaker nations were terrified at the sight of their mop headed, nose pierced, scarred bodies, and by their name as man eaters; and they were, if unwatched by Williams, or the grim Brundage, or Francisco the Spaniard, quarrelsome bullies among other natives.

"No fight!" said Williams. "The bearded man, Harrison, comes."

Barai jabbered explosively. He wanted Harrison's head. It was Harrison and the thin, unmanly yellow men who had stolen and wrecked the ship.

"He has wearied his eyes looking for any ship, and comes now not knowing whom he will find," said Williams.

An hour later the squat, barrel bodied Harrison stood up in the canoe while the natives dipped their paddles aimlessly and stared distrustfully at the cannibal blacks.

Harrison, bawling hoarsely, hailed the *Glasgow;* and when Williams at last appeared, springing lightly on the rail with a hand to back stay, there was much chatter from the natives in the canoe; but Harrison swore, astounded. In roaring anxiety he called:

"I can make it up to you, Williams—everything. Buy forty ships—you an' me. The chinks—they've damn near killed me, an' will!"

"You need killing. And Chinamen do it well—that sort of thing—I've heard."

"But there's treasure," Harrison bawled defensively, groping for the sensitive, greedy spots that were, that must be, in every man.

"Is my wreck burned?" Williams asked.

"Ow! He talks of a dirty wreck when—" Harrison seemed to appeal to invisible listeners of sea and sky— "when the chinks has jewels that big." In bafflement Harrison flung up a club-like fist.

"No jewels *that* big," said Williams, and held up his own fist. "Is my wreck burned?"

"The niggers done it. But we're white men, you an' me. An' I'd rather do you a favor 'n any man. I owe it to you!"

There was a ludicrous, pleading whine in his hoarse voice and he tried to look repentant.

"Then come on board."

The invitation was what Harrison wanted, but, having got it, he was afraid to accept. He bawled such things as:

"Bygones is bygones? You won't hold no grudge? You give me your word?"

"I'll give you nothing but food and whisky."

Harrison hesitated uneasily. He knew Williams and was afraid of him—half hated him because of the fear. Harrison had had a miserable time of it ashore.

"Not coming? All right." Williams jumped from the rail and turned away.

"Ahoy, Williams! Hey—I'm comin'!"

It took many of Harrison's loud curses to stir the natives at the paddles. They dreaded coming alongside where the fierce Solomon Islanders waited. As soon as Harrison, stepping on a thwart, reached to the *Glasgow's* low rail and began struggling up, they drew the canoe well off; and when Williams and Harrison disappeared, the timid Wakleans—from a safe distance—bantered threats and jeers with the man eaters, as small dogs do with big dogs that are fenced in.

HARRISON was dirty and somewhat shrunken; his fat, squinty eyes were deeper in his head and had the look of a crafty sick man's. He poked out a hand at Williams and let it hang there for a moment in midair as if he did not quite know how to get it back to his side. Then he scratched at his matted beard, trying to make it appear that he had not tried to shake hands.

"I been through hell," he said, explaining his rags, his dirt, his shrunken body. "I'm dyin' for food you can bite on. That nigger mush—ow! Them chinks—they

run me out. I had to go 'cross the bay. It's been hell."

In the cabin Harrison scraped wolfishly at a can of tinned beef and drank whisky, scarcely watered.

"Cocernuts an' bananas, an' fish. Mush! My stomick can't go fish. It stinks. Never could. Ow, it's been hell." He spoke pityingly of himself.

Williams, not sitting, stood erect, watching. Harrison half furtively lifted his eyes from time to time and was uneasy, so he drank more whisky. Then Williams, without comment, took away the bottle and stowed it in a chest.

Harrison, well filled and warmed, stretched out his legs.

"If I had a pipe an' some *temback* I'd be a man again."

Williams, in silence, turned to a cupboard where one of Hale's old briars lay, and tossed it and a bit of twist to the table. Harrison grunted, pleased.

"You're a good sort, Williams, you are. I need a light."

Williams handed him sulphur matches.

Harrison smoked with sucking pop of lips as if tasting something good.

"You won't be sorry, Williams. Them chinks—they got the niggers there all thisaway—" he closed his fingers into a tight fist. "But us an' your blacks. Huh!" Then with a slow glance about the cabin and a cautious, leering, friendly tone, half commending, "What you doin' with ol' Hale's schooner?"

"He knew I took it. Came aboard with me."

"I hoped you'd stole it. I don't like 'im. I'm warnin' you—look out for him. He don't do business without gettin' the profit. All! Now you want to hear about them chinks, don't you?"

"Let's have it."

"Right." Harrison leaned back. "Ain't you goin' to set down?"

"I'm listening."

"You know ol' Ghorlan of Karnu?"

"Know the name."

"He's a queer un. I don't like 'im much. I use to fetch stuff to 'im from Sydney—booze, canned stuff. That's how I knowed them chinks. Somethin' queer there. I smelt it. Damn queer. Once that old woman that looks dead—Lydia, they call 'er—she just popped noiseless out o' the shadders there on the path. Give me an orful scare! I'd never seen 'er before. Looked like a ghost. She poked out a letter to me. Said somethin' low an' quick I couldn't catch. Started to say somethin' more, then we heard them chinks comin' an' she went on, like a damn ghost. Black un. I ask about 'er afterwards. Crazy, they said. I believe it."

"And the letter?"

"I stuck it in my shirt an' went with the chinks. Later I saw it wasn't for me. Just a letter—I forget the name. I stuck it there in the cabin meanin' to hand it on to somebody but forgot it till there in Sydney a man an' woman come on board. Wanted to see the islands, so they said. They wanted to get away from Sydney. Queer feller. Dudish. Full o' bluff an' nervous. I'd have liked that woman if she'd let me. They quarreled, them two. He was afraid o' her. Tried to pretend he wasn't, but he was. Card gambler from what I overheard. Killed somebody. They went ashore at Apia. I give her the letter for to hand on. It was to somebody in England. Then I went back to Karnu to get some o' Hale's copra.

"There that chink Woo Lung he come to me an' talked. He give me five hundred dollars, gold. I was to get a thousand more at Sydney. So I told Hale his price was too low for carryin' copra. I sailed off an' come back at night around the point. Out of sight. The chinks they come up about midnight in a big outrigger. They was alone in the boat—but they hadn't rowed out all that way themselves. I know they hadn't. Besides, when I jumped into the canoe to scuttle it like they said, there was blood! Well, long as it wasn't none o' mine I wasn't askin' questions. Not with five Chinamen on board, an' me an' my boys numberin' only four!

"Then we got into a blow and went to smash over on the Ponlea Reefs. My

three blacks stole a boat an' made off. I hope they drowned! Most likely did. Were scairt o' the chinks. Well, can't blame 'em; so was I. Still am.

"You showed up over there an' I told you like they told me to say that we were sea slug fishers. That's what all chinks are—that an' storekeepers. You may've noticed how they keep their eyes on me? Give me no chance to talk to you.

"When we come here to Waklea, they put it up to me on the point o' their knives that I was to steal your schooner. Wanted me to kill you, but I wouldn't do that." Harrison's husky voice pleaded for belief. "That halfbreed nigger, Sam, there ashore, who's been a whaler, he'd 've shot you, only I wouldn't let 'im."

"For if he had missed?" Williams asked with a matter-of-fact, uptilted inflection that gave Harrison a creepy sensation.

"Them chinks is Joners, I tell you. Downright blasted Joners! I'm done with 'em. We run your ship on the rocks. We thought you'd sure come an' try to wipe us out. The ol' chief there ashore, he was glad to give you the biggest boat an' have you go. He'll need whisky an' quinine when he knows you're back, damn 'im!

"Them chinks they acted orful mean to me after I wrecked your schooner—'twasn't my fault! That nigger Sam he had the wheel an' said he knew the channel. But I'll even up—you an' me'll even up on them chinks. I knowed they wore cur'ous little bags around their necks—all of 'em. One night just feelin' lonesome an' cur'ous, about ten days ago, I slipped up close an' laid in the shadders. An' I seen—I tell you, Williams—jewels! They was gamblin' with jewels—that big!" He raised his fist, looked at it, then reluctantly, like a man who means to be truthful, added, "Or nearly."

"And they found you?"

"Found me?" Harrison swore profusely. "Not much they didn't. I wouldn't be here if they had. I'd be so full of knife holes I'd look like a sponge." Harrison twisted about and looked toward the chest where he had seen Williams stow the bottle. "My mouth's all hot an' dry."

"What happened?" Williams stood in the attitude of a man ready to leave, who was just pausing from moment to moment to hear the last of a story.

"You don't believe me?"

"Not wholly, no."

"Ow, an' me tellin' Gawd's truth!" He stared suspiciously at Williams. "You won't lay ashore with your niggers an' grab them chinks? See what they got in them little bags round their necks?" Harrison opened his mouth in a gasp of reproach, like one who felt himself betrayed. "An' whack with me?"

"What would you or I do with jewels that big?" Williams asked with mockery, and lifted a fist.

"Ain't all that big. An' they'd buy things we want! Booze, women—could live like nabobs! You mean—mean to take it all for yourself?" Then with slack jawed cajolery, "You wouldn't, would you? The word of ol' Hurricane Williams—I've always spoke up for you, Williams, when men have talked. That's right! Truth—yes, sir! You believe me, don't you?" Then, "You must be crazy not to want jewels. Or think I am to believe you if you say you don't! What you goin' to do?"

"Why did the Chinamen run you off?"

"I talked to that Sam. He's the only nigger there that knows about jewels. Knows they is such things an' what they're worth. Somehow the chinks got on to it. Sam he must've told 'em! I had to cut an' run. Go 'cross the bay to live. It's been hell. I just set an' watch the sea f'r a ship. Saw you an' come. I'm glad you come. I c'n make it up to you—what I owe f'r wreckin' your schooner thataway."

Williams stood ready to turn away, watching him. The schooner heaved to the toss of the swells with a gentle creak of wood; and the snappish babel of the blacks, taunting the Waklean natives, came down into the cabin.

"I can trust you, can't I?" Harrison asked distrustfully.

"To do as I say—yes."

"What you goin' do?"

"Hold you, and take the Chinamen to Ghorlan!"

"Hold—" Harrison rose up with a lurching heave, astounded. The pipe fell from his hand. "Hold me pris'ner? An' take me an' the chinks— Not me—I ain't done nothin'. An' Ghorlan—you can't care about him! I—I don't understand!"

"You will when you face Ghorlan."

"You ain't doin' right, Williams!" Harrison begged with flustered tongue. "An' I ain't done nothin' wrong!" he added in a squawky protest. "Them chinks—they chartered my ship for passage. An' if they stole from Ghorlan, why I bet he stole them jewels first! Be sure o' that, Williams! You're all wrong. An' Red Ghorlan, what's he to you anyhow?"

"Friend," said Williams and, facing the passageway, shouted.

There was the pattering of running feet, quick, eager grunts, and Barai came grinning in the cruel hope of finding trouble. Two naked blacks, with the whistle of excited breath in their flat noses, crowded at his side in the narrow passageway.

Williams said something in clicking, hoarse gutturals, then went out without a backward glance; and Harrison, aghast with fear, bellowed after him, begging and cursing. He thought this was death, and struggled as the blacks, barehanded, closed in with low, eager yelps. Barai had humor—cruel, and of one kind only. In bastard English he spoke of *kai-kai*, grinning; and when Harrison's legs and arms were tied, pinched and thumped his body, grinning with a smack of his lips, saying—

"You belong long cookpot, fella."

Harrison, trussed like a dog waiting the blow of clubs—dogs were beaten to death so there would be no loss of blood—was piled into the bunk of a small room, where he groaned and heaved and abjectly complained. Not for a moment did he think otherwise than that Williams meant to plunder the Chinese and keep for himself whatever he found.

CHAPTER V

WILLIAMS' PROMISE

THE *Glasgow*, towed with the tide, went slowly into the rock bound bay. The blacks, having no guns with them in the boat, pulled uneasily at the oars, for the natives ashore had put off in canoes and hovered about with menacing flourishes.

Williams wanted his blacks to stick to their oars which, anyhow, if excited, they were likely to pick up and use as awkward paddles. If guns had been at hand they would have been dropping the oars to pick up the weapons, return the menacing flourishes, perhaps shoot. The light wind was tricky, and the tide's currants swished back with a zigzag, weaving pull. He had sent in word to the chief by the canoe that brought out Harrison that, if trouble started, the man eaters would be turned loose on the beach. So the Wakleans howled and made wild gestures, but were uneasily careful not to hurt anybody.

The wreck lay on a jagged corner of the bay, burned to the water's edge. The natives had looted and destroyed it; burned it in the vague hope of destroying all trace lest sometime or other they be accused of having cut it out and murdered the crew; but there it lay, a charred ship's bones, beyond salvage.

The *Glasgow* came to anchor some two hundred yards offshore; and among the natives on shore, Williams could make out Chinese, like droop-lidded vultures, patient and watchful; and no doubt uneasy too that it was he—no stranger to them—who had come in. He had left five, but could now count only four.

The *Glasgow* was hailed in English, or rather English curses, nearly as meaningless as a parrot's chatter, as the halfbreed called Sam, who had been on a whaler, stood up and shouted from afar. He was crafty but unintelligent, meddlesome, arrogant and cowardly. Much of his breath was wasted in oaths, used for emphasis, not to be offensive, for his tone was placating.

"Damnahellfire, Cap'n, what you want?" A flow of curses; then, "All boys like you but—" With blistering language he referred to the Solomon Islanders. "You come 'shore, Tarou—" Tarou was the old chief, much bullied by the flashy Sam— "talk you all same brother. Yes. Where Harry, unh?" This referred to Harrison. "Him big liar!" said Sam, with a breath taking flow of profanity for emphasis.

Williams answered in the native tongue, speaking it better than Sam spoke English—

"What is there to lie about?"

The question left the impudent halfcaste in rather a fluster.

"What he tell you, Cap'n?"

"That you burned my wreck!"

Sam threw up his hands in indignant astonishment and began a defensive explanation, full of oaths and falsehood, though perhaps not wholly untruthful in saying that it was Harrison who had urged trying to steal the ship; and concluding with the question, craftily intoned—

"You come 'shore, Cap'n?"

"I am coming ashore."

"When you come 'shore, Cap'n?"

"When you and Tarou have made a pile of every can, nail and bolt, of every rag, knife and rope, you took from the wreck. Then I am coming ashore to get it."

Sam and his fellow natives jabbered plaintively and lifted loud voices in explanation and protest, confessionally admitting the tinned stuff had been eaten, but as a hopeful afterthought denying it had been taken. All joined emphatically in blaming Harrison.

"You believe me no lie, Cap'n?"

Williams did not reply, and silence in itself was enough of an answer to make Sam feel he was somehow bungling. After other inconsequential shouting he had the canoe rowed nearer and asked—

"What Harry tell you about chinkmen, Cap'n?"

And from his tone Williams knew that this was the question Sam had been sent to ask. Harrison had discovered the secret of the little bags they wore about their necks and had tried to tempt the halfcaste Sam into plundering them. Sam, the babbler, had told the Chinese. Harrison had escaped from the village; but at that his days would have been few. Now he had got to Williams' ship, and had of course bought, or tried to buy, himself out of Williams' anger by telling what the Chinese carried in the little bags about their necks. They had sent Sam to make inquiry.

"What is there to tell?" Williams asked.

"He big liar, Cap'n."

"I am sure of it," said Williams; and Sam grinned, jubilant.

The outrigger headed shoreward.

All the afternoon canoes hovered about the *Glasgow*, some offering trade, wanting tobacco, with voices calling in loud denial of having had any part in the looting of the wreck. Stuff out of the *Glasgow's* lazarette was exchanged for fresh vegetables and fruit, with Williams watching. He did not trust his blacks, whose idea of a good bargain, not unlike some white men's ideas, was to get by without paying and scorn the loser with threats. Williams saw to it that his seamen bargained honestly.

Sam came near and went away three or four times, not venturing on board, but preparing the way for Tarou's coming; and at last Tarou, a fat, sluggish man, came in native pomp, with two of the Chinese in his canoe. They hung off uneasily, circling the schooner, much troubled by the fear of boarding Williams' ship when they knew he had cause for vengeance.

Tarou wanted to make peace, particularly if inexpensive lying could do it. He had dread of Williams. The Chinese, too, marooned on this windward shore, unvisited by ships, wanted passage. They tried to talk across the water but Williams was unresponsive.

"Come aboard if you like and go when you want," he said, making a promise.

They came alongside with the nervous hesitancy of wild animals wanting food but fearing a trap. Williams' blacks,

with a swarming rush, huddled at the rail above the canoe, and reluctantly moved away, scattered by Williams' words and gesture.

The Chinese, from the first seaward glimpse of the *Glasgow*, had been astounded to recognize Hale's schooner. All their crafty uneasiness was deeply stirred by believing that Williams had been at Karnu. They thought that they must in no way indicate that they knew the schooner; and, being a little contemptuous of white men's subtlety, felt Williams would soon disclose what he knew, or guessed, of them.

THEY came on board, Tarou needing help, for he was fat, and teetered on weak legs. He looked about for reassurance at his followers, all of whom would have scattered like wind blown paper if the blacks had rushed. Tarou was wearing a coat with tarnished brass buttons, split like a shedding locust's jacket up the back. Sam strutted timidly, wanting to be important as became the power behind the chief, but not wanting to be reproached as a meddlesome plot maker. The Chinese, lean, sinewed, with low lidded watchfulness and Oriental composure, stood unobtrusively. They were more than half naked, with a huddle of rags about their waists and little black bags dangling from their scrawny necks.

"Where's Woo Lung?" Williams asked.

Both Chinese bowed and one answered in a thin, slow voice:

"He velly sick." Pressure of lean yellow fingers against the stomach and slight groans with a wry twist of the face gave a pantomime of Woo Lung's suffering. "Think maybe him die. Velly sick."

Both were impassively watchful, but Williams' glance did not pause on the little greasy black leather bags, tied about their necks with stout cord. From time to time they fingered the bags as if inviting notice. And from time to time, too, they fingered with unconscious gestures the hilt-like lumps in the rags about their waists.

Tarou sat in lordly dignity on a hatch and offered his pipe to a retainer to be filled and lighted; and Sam, the officious, interpreted what Williams understood better in the native tongue than in Sam's English; but Sam was the sort of half-caste buck that insists on being chief mourner at every funeral.

Tarou and Sam both, no doubt put to it by the Chinese before they left the canoe, wanted to know about Harrison; what he had told, where he was. They learned nothing. Williams demanded the loot from the wreck, with indemnity of five thousand coconuts. There weren't many coconuts in the village or near it, all of which Williams knew nearly as well as Tarou, who groaned, sulked, begged, and offered to compromise by giving Williams a half dozen native girls, young and desirable. Tarou knew something of white men.

Williams smiled grimly under a steady frown, not answering other than by slight shake of head. Tarou began temptingly to embellish the attractiveness of the maidens, but was silenced in confusion with a whip-like gesture, pointing shoreward. Then he whined and pow-wowed with startled retainers. Williams' silence was a menace.

Sam, touched furtively on the back by a Chinese forefinger, looked up from where his head was bent in the pow-wow, then glanced quickly at Williams whose glance seemed fastened directly on the chief's face.

Williams had the wariness of a far hunted man. Any hand might be raised against him at any time, and the law would nod in approval; and he had the watchfulness of a hawk which sees from the corners of its eyes. Now his gaze did not flicker from the face of Tarou, but he expectantly gave his attention to the noisy Sam who had been touched by the Chinese.

But neither Sam nor any one else tried to come near Williams' back. Instead Sam stood for a moment in the half blank puzzlement of one trying to recall scarcely rehearsed lines; then with loud

voice and an impudence that came naturally, all with jumbled oaths, he turned on one of the Chinese, fingering the bag at his neck.

"You fella, whattahell why all time damn this thing you hellfire belonga neck unh? Whatta belong thisa thing, unh?"

The Chinese, with an unhurried gesture of dignified protest, raised slim, sinewy fingers, putting aside Sam's hand and taking a short backward step, said:

"Chinaman go way leave China, take someling belong China. Mucha glood luck. All time hab China—you want hab look-see?"

He slowly undid the pouch and held it open, and Sam fingered the small handful of pebbles, while both Chinese with low lidded, sidelong furtiveness, eyed Williams, who showed a disappointing lack of interest. Not without a neat touch of craftiness, they were making out that Harrison had been mistaken in thinking these cherished pebbles, presumably carried as amulets, were jewels.

Presently Tarou and his retinue withdrew, feeling dissatisfied. Village maidens could not take the place of coconuts. The Chinese, with cautious delay, had not mentioned getting a passage on the *Glasgow*, and, being subtle fellows, were not at all reassured because Williams did not reproach them for having been party to the wrecking of his ship. But at least they had proved that they did not carry jewels. Or so they thought. What Williams thought was:

"A childish trick. Cunning, but not clever."

For two days the *Glasgow* swung at her moorings like a restless sea beast, now tugging to be free and go seaward, now straining to drift shoreward and be driftwood, as if either way there would be escape; and Williams, like a watchful keeper, stayed on board letting Wakleans and Chinese fret in the wonderment of what to do.

Canoes came every hour of the day, hovering curiously, and prowled about with stealthy paddles in the dark, either idly curious or snooping for a glimpse of Harrison. Both natives and Chinese would know better what to think if they knew he was dead; and the ubiquitous Sam was out two or three times a day, now with some scrawny chickens in the canoe, now with fish or vegetables, making trade the excuse for prowling and talk.

He was not allowed on board but grew familiar, half friendly, with the cannibal blacks that took his chickens with a far downward reach and dropped tin meats at his head. Then, one day, Williams being below deck, Sam handed up a coconut filled with palm wine, strong and sour. The taste of it was like raw meat to half famished cats; and Sam, tutored by the Chinese, drove a hurried bargain, getting information for other coconuts, which were craftily not filled with wine.

THE PADDLES tore at the water as Sam hurried ashore, gleeful, while the blacks with the fresh juice of pure coconut milk on their mouths howled violent and obscene threats. The Chinese, full of guile, knew nearly as much about blacks—at least about their weaknesses—as Williams himself; and knew too that if much palm wine was given them they would be noticeably drunk, and Williams would guess at what had happened.

An hour later out came two Chinese, humble as wet dogs, fuller of guile than ever for now they knew much that had before been doubtful; and with crafty guesses they imagined the worst, which is the way cautious men plan.

Some things they had merely suspected with uneasiness now seemed proved: the demands Williams had made on the village about the loot from his wreck, which gave the fat Tarou much sleeplessness so that he grunted and growled and fretted in endless pow-wows, was merely Williams' excuse for lying at anchor.

He lay at anchor, apparently holding no grudge or suspicion of the Chinese, and so gave them plenty of time to become reassured enough to ask again for a passage; and thus, eventually, they would be drawn on board, bearing everything

they owned—and so be easily pillaged. If he came ashore after them, using force, some might escape and all might conceal what he was after.

Now feeling that they knew as much about Williams' secret plans as he knew of them himself, they came in the middle of the afternoon, looking woeful, and rowed by two natives.

They hailed the schooner with polite, sing-song, squeaky voices; and, climbing on board, bent their scrawny necks abjectly, asking the honorable "cap'n" to hold some conversation with their unworthy selves.

"Now what?" said Williams.

They began in the miserable jargon of pidgin English, perhaps that they might seem more stupid than they were. The gaunt Woo Lung spoke English about as well as anybody, but—

"Woo Lung him velly slick, soon dlie, dlie man-man—ow-ow."

They were miserable, unhappy, starving; and would Cap'n Wailums again receive them on board his ship?

"Why should I?" Williams asked sharply, and pointed across toward the wreck.

Such an answer was unexpected. They exchanged glances of slant eyed inquiry, one of the other, bowed their scrawny necks lower in humble petition and spoke of friends at Sydney who would reward him generously.

Williams skeptically shook his head.

They said there was no way for them to get off the beach unless some ship took them, and no ships came; what could they do?

"Climb the mountains. Plenty of ships come to leeward. Much trade."

That was hopeless for them. They did not know the way; the bushmen were unfriendly.

"Who can be friendly with faithless men!" said Williams.

They drew their scrawny necks down between their lean shoulders, looking more than ever like vulturous birds, and answered humbly that they were reproached for another's misdeeds, blaming Harrison. What did they know of ships, being poor reef fishermen, seeking sea slugs?

And Williams, not answering, thought of the *Anne of Southern.*

Would the honorable cap'n give them permission to put themselves at his mercy? They would come on board and work as well as they could; he could put them ashore wherever it suited his pleasure; they would not complain.

And Williams said:

"If you like. But I promise nothing."

He was glad to be able to say that, for it was a strange weakness of his—or perhaps a kind of strength—that he never promised faithlessly; but kept his word always as if a lie were some evil thing that would make him timid, rot his courage.

They thanked him with the humbleness of insincerity, and returned ashore mystified. He had been so unfavorable and without greed they could not quite believe that he suspected treasure.

What they could not suspect was that Williams drew his line, and not even a hair's breadth divided it from what was honest and what was not; but in his own mind it very definitely divided what he took needfully, and what was mere greed, seeking luxury. There was not much law in the remote parts of the South Seas of those days except what desperate and often wicked men willed should be law; and Williams fought for his life ten times a year without caring who died, and he would take if he could whatever seemed needful and so was much hated, far hunted, and bore the evil reports of other men's deeds.

He would no more have robbed Ghorlan because Ghorlan was a robber and outside the law than he would have torn a ring from Raccla's finger because she was a girl and without strength. A queer sense of honesty perhaps, but such as it was, it was his; and even if tempted at times to do otherwise he held to it; which was one reason that men said he was mad.

Williams went below to where Harrison

lay in a bunk, comfortable enough with his hands free, pipe and tobacco at hand; but one leg, like a pig's to a pole, was made fast with rope parceled to defeat the pick of fingers and its loops were padlocked.

"Why you treat me this way? Ain't I—"

"Many a man lazy as you are would be thankful. Food, tobacco, sleep."

"What you goin' do with me?"

"What do you think ought to be done with you?"

"I made it all up, ain't I, by tellin' of them chinks?"

"By telling what I already knew?" Williams asked contemptuously.

"You knew! You didn't—couldn't. How could you?"

"For one thing, that chief Chinese who is ashore sick—you knew him for years and knew him as Woo Lung. Called him Woo Lung. At Karnu I heard his name, heard him described, heard that he and all the Chinamen went night fishing and never returned. Heard other things—never mind what; but enough to come back here."

Williams paused and Harrison did not speak. He sat up with bearded mouth adroop and eyes wide for he knew by the look that something more was coming; and the look of Williams made him afraid, it was so direct.

The little room was hot, but the sweat that washed Harrison's body as if splashed with spray seemed suddenly chilled as if the spray were cold. In the silence of waiting the drone of the surf with its long sigh and booming splatter on the rocks seemed loud and noisy, and Harrison huddled forward as if afraid what Williams said would be low spoken and only half heard.

It was not low spoken. The words came clear and with a force of tone and meaning that seemed to strike. Harrison jerked his head up and back as it from a blow.

"Whether you believe me or not doesn't matter; but that even you should know the truth does! The Chinese are coming —have asked to come. What they bring with them, I shall not ask or try to learn. So don't think I am going to steal and not give you a share. But if you or they lift a hand on board this ship, I'll kill you—all of you!"

TO BE CONTINUED

Statement of the ownership, management, circulation, etc., required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, of *Adventure* published twice a month at New York, N. Y., for April 1, 1931. State of New York, county of New York, ss. Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared FRED LEWIS, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Treasurer of THE BUTTERICK PUBLISHING COMPANY, publisher of *Adventure*, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 411, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit: 1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher, THE BUTTERICK PUBLISHING COMPANY, 161 Sixth Avenue, New York City. Editor, A. A. PROCTOR, 161 Sixth Avenue, New York City. Managing Editor, VICTOR WEYBRIGHT, 161 Sixth Avenue, New York City. Business Managers, None. 2. That the owner is: THE BUTTERICK PUBLISHING COMPANY, a corporation, 161 Sixth Avenue, New York City, whose stockholder is: THE BUTTERICK COMPANY, a corporation, 161 Sixth Avenue, New York City, whose stockholders are: J. S. BACHE & Co., 42 Broadway, New York City, BLAKE BROS. & Co., 5 Nassau St., New York City, JOHN P. BOYLE, c/o MOORE & SCHLEY, 100 Broadway, New York City, EDDY & Co., 16 Wall Street, New York City, FRANK K. HOOVER, 8 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Illinois, JOHN J. JOHNSTON, c/o Continental Illinois Bank & Trust Co., Chicago, Illinois, S. R. LATSHAW, Butterick Building, 223 Spring St., New York City, MERRICK & Co., c/o Customers Securities Dept., The New York Trust Co., 100 Broadway, New York City, JOSEPH A. MOORE, 300 Park Avenue, New York City, MOORE & SCHLEY, 100 Broadway, New York City, E. A. PIERCE & Co., 11 Wall St., New York City, SHEARSON, HAMMILL & Co., 71 Broadway, New York City, JOHN T. TINKLER, c/o Moore & Schley, 100 Broadway, New York City, WEBB WALKER, Medical Arts Building, Ft. Worth, Texas, WARWICK CORPORATION, 910 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Illinois. 3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: THE BOWERY SAVINGS BANK, 110 East 42nd Street, New York City, (Holder of mortgage on real property). 4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him. FRED LEWIS, Treasurer. Sworn to and subscribed before me this 26th day of March, 1931. CHAPPELL CORY, JR., Notary Public, New York County; County Clerk's No. 202, Reg. No. 2-C-359; Kings County Clerk's No. 174, Reg. No. 2208. (My commission expires March 30, 1932. [*Seal*]—Form 3526—Ed. 1924.)

BLACK BIMGARRI

By WYMAN SIDNEY SMITH

A Story of the Australian Bush

A SINGLE telephone wire strung down across the valley from Bat Harkin's "bush pub" and faded off into the scrubby eucalyptus toward Bimbour Station. Bill Green and Wally Irwin gazed at it casually while they listened to the rumbling wagon wheels which marked their progress toward the public house. Bales of hay and rolls of rabbit wire were piled high in the wagon behind them; dust from the horses' feet rose into their nostrils.

"That wire goes right past Duffer Dam, doesn't it?" Wally inquired.

"I guess so," Bill nodded.

"Never figured out why Bat Harkin ever wanted to talk so much to that Burke Herbert over on Bimbour that he had to have a wire out to his place."

Wally knocked the ashes out of his pipe. He did it mournfully—they were allowing themselves four pipes of tobacco a day and this was his third.

Bill flipped the reins and the horses stumbled into a jog trot that lasted until they reached the tie rail in front of Harkin's pub.

Three doors faced out from the mud walled, sheet iron roofed house—"Coffee Room," "Bar," and "Store" printed over them on rough boards.

Melva Harkin came out the door marked Store, observed the two rabbiters carefully for a moment and then smiled as she called out—

"Hello—stop awhile."

Blue eyes like the sheer azure of the Australian zenith overhead, hair shining with glints like eucalyptus leaves whirling in the sun, and a wistfulness in her round cheeked face had made her queen of the back country even when she was sixteen. She was twenty now.

"Bat around?" Bill inquired after they had exchanged greetings.

"No—he went off this morning. The telephone to Bimbour was out of order and I think he went to fix it."

Melva continued to look at the two dusty faced partners as though she wanted to ask a question.

"Can we borrow a little water for the horses?" Bill inquired again.

"Sure." She nodded eagerly. Her eyes sighted the rabbit wire and she asked genially, "You going to rabbit Duffer Dam?"

"Isn't anybody else there, is they?" Wally demanded sharply.

She shook her head.

"Nobody's been through in weeks," she said. "Not since the drouth got bad. Only—only—" she hesitated—"Jack Burwell, the police trooper, went by this morning."

"Jack Burwell?" Wally repeated. Then he turned to Bill. "Remember him, don't you, Bill? He caught that murderer nobody else could find over in Queensland. Did it with an old black tracker everybody thought was crazy. They say the black took his share o' the reward in tobacco an' went back to the bush."

Before Bill could more than nod, a kangaroo suddenly poked around the house and came up to sniff warily of the new scent.

"Here, Sally," Melva invited. But the 'roo was captious. She refused to come nearer. Melva laughed at her. "She's a wild woman," she explained. "She spends her days here, now and then, but nearly every night she wanders off. I have a suspicion that she visits old Bimgarri."

"Bimgarri—" Bill grinned. "That black scalawag still campin' at Duffer Dam?"

"Oh, yes," Melva answered. "He says his magic keeps the dam from going dry. Burke Herbert and father pay him in tobacco and provisions, you know. They say he keeps the other natives around here in order. He does, too, they're scared stiff of him."

"How does he do it?" Wally asked curiously.

"I don't know, but the other blacks claim he can make the nights talk out loud. I think he even has Sally hypnotized because once or twice she's come home with a string tied around her tail, and she won't even let me touch it."

Sally was evidently not interested in such conversation, saw no immediate prospect of sugar or milk, and decided to lope off. Wally lingered to talk with Melva while Bill drove the horses around to the water tank.

An hour later they set off for Duffer Dam.

"Got to get there in time to set up the rabbit fence," Bill apologized as he saw Melva's large eyes bent on him.

And again the cloud of dust rose around the wagon. Rains were weeks late in the back country of the Australian continent—only the rabbits and kangaroos could survive in that drouth bitten world.

"Seems like Melva had somethin' on her mind," Bill remarked once.

Wally mumbled and was silent. He spoke only a few words until they came in sight of Duffer Dam. In a clump of trees somewhat distant from the dam they spied the black figure of Bimgarri, the old witch doctor. He eyed them craftily when they drove up and then continued with his business of scraping out a new needlewood boomerang with a piece of glass and the stub of a rusty kitchen knife.

Except for a loincloth, his bronze-brown body was naked; his wavy brown hair flew out in a tumbled mass around his flat nosed, wide cheeked face. His Stone Age skull nodded slightly to and fro as he worked. Back of him they noted his sleeping quarters—an old piece of sheet iron propped up with a couple of

crazy posts to make a haphazard lean-to.

"Dry out here?" Wally demanded at last as the old fellow remained silent.

Wally grimaced as he spoke, for in the last thirty miles he and Bill had seen hundreds of reeking, drying carcasses of sheep and cattle.

But the witch doctor only scraped his boomerang.

"Plenty rabbits around here?" Bill asked.

Bimgarri stopped scraping a moment.

"You know that Missa Melva Harkin?" he queried.

The two white men looked at each other.

"Sure." Wally nodded.

THE THIN, wrinkled hands of the witch man caressed the smooth point of his three-pound boomerang. Then he picked up a sharp steel point that looked like a headless nail and measured it against the point of wood.

"The old devil is tryin' to make believe he don't know us." Bill nudged his companion.

Wally hunched over on the seat.

"Say!" he shouted. "Plenty rabbits around here?"

Bimgarri shook his head.

"No rabbity," he replied. "Plenty devil-devil maybe. How long you stay?"

Bill chuckled. Wally's eyes narrowed as he listened. Of the two it was Wally who had an uncanny comprehension of black ways.

"You watch out for devil-devil," Bimgarri continued. "Me fix this boomerang for him."

"We're going to catch a few thousand rabbits here." Bill laughed.

Bimgarri returned to the scraping of his weapon. He appeared almost to blend with the earth as he squatted there. Moments passed before he glanced up again.

"You catch rabbity this place?" he inquired gravely.

Bill nodded.

"You stay here till rain comes?"

"What do you want to know for?" Wally interrupted.

Bimgarri blinked.

"Just make talk-talk," he rejoined nonchalantly.

Bill and Wally drove on to the edge of the *mulga* scrub that lay beyond Duffer Dam. The dam was low—a small flat of brackish water about forty feet across was all that remained of the reservoir. The heat seemed to eat it down by inches.

"The old liar," Bill chuckled as he studied the dam. "Rabbits here by the thousand. We'll make a grubstake here, all right."

Wally's eyes scanned the landscape, lingering on the boundary fence of Bimbour sheep station two miles away and on the bush track that wandered on into the scrub. The needle leafed she-oaks stood grim and ghastly with their barren, broken branches.

"The telephone wire's cut," he cried suddenly, as he pointed to a break in the line as it straggled through the scrub.

Bill was already dragging down bales of wire from the wagon.

"Parrots done it, I expect," he said. "I've seen 'em ride a wire with their beaks, swingin' back an' forth an' pinchin' till it breaks."

"Ye-ah, I've seen 'em too," Wally grunted. "But I reckon somebody just happened to cut that wire so's if Bat Harkin and Burke Herbert want to talk, they'll have to drive one way or the other, now."

Wally met Bill's eyes stubbornly.

"An' I reckon you noticed old Bimgarri was fixin' a new kind o' boomerang usin' a sharpened spike that looked like it was made of telephone wire for a point?"

"Can't help it," Bill replied.

But Wally grew insistent.

"What'd he ask about Melva for then?" he demanded. "I know him—he's got something up. Parrots didn't cut that wire."

Bill remained silent. Up and down the back blocks Wally Irwin was known as a

good "cobber," a good partner; but now and then he'd fix on some queer notion and work himself into seven fits trying to solve it.

Bill started work on the rabbit trap—a wide circle of wire netting around the pond of water with two sides shaped into funnels with small openings just large enough to admit the thirst mad rabbits, but too inconspicuous to make escape easy. Wally worked alongside him and when they had finished the sun was smoldering down the red clay hills and murky haze of scrubby trees. A ruddy wash spread out over the western sky. Dust floated in the air like ashes.

Wally walked off into the scrub and a few minutes later returned with an armful of sandalwood sticks with which he built a fire to boil the billy can of water for tea while Bill mixed a mess of damper dough from flour and water. Pungent blue smoke of the sandalwood rose in the air like incense.

After poking up the fire for a fair blaze around the billy can Wally suddenly remarked—"It's a rum job, rabbitin'."

"Could be worse," Bill grinned. "We was both broke an' had to rent the outfit. But we might clear a couple hundred pounds apiece if we have luck."

Wally grunted.

Bill stood up, his lanky frame towering over his partner. For a second he studied the stout, squat figure shrewdly.

"No sign o' rain," he said.

"Nope," Wally agreed.

"You don't count what that old witch croaker said, do you?" Bill persisted.

"Maybe," Wally grunted.

"Are you sick?" Bill demanded.

Wally poked the fire a little more and dropped a portion of tea into the boiling water as he removed the billy can.

"Gives me the creeps, this place," he said. "Don't like that busted telephone line."

"That all?" Bill laughed.

Wally's plump red face broke into an uneasy grin.

"Feel just like I did that night we camped at Blanchedeep an' found a dead man beside us in the mornin'. Things don't act natural around here."

Wally got up.

"Besides," he concluded, "when I was gettin' this sandalwood right now I see footprints over there by one of the trees. An' the heel marks was plain an' square like they belonged to a pair o' boots like a police trooper wears."

BILL looked sharply at his partner. But he said nothing further. They couldn't leave Duffer Dam now, dead broke and in debt for the rental of the outfit. But he had bunkered with Wally Irwin up and down the "back o' beyond" too long not to have acquired a wholesome respect for the stout fellow's hunches.

Darkness settled over them as they completed the scant meal. Strange shadows began darting to and fro, squeals and squeaks sounded about them.

Rabbits were heading toward the pond from all directions. They struck the fence and then fought and squealed and circled round and round until they found one of the openings. Black, fawn, white, calico—a motley mob of them crammed into the wire trap.

A half dozen kangaroos poked their heads into the skyline to watch furtively. A pair of emus came up like stalking brown ghosts. Foxes herded among the rabbits with tails in the dust as they sought to get through the wire. From the scrub came the fluting whistle of the boobook owl—

"More-pork, more-pork, more-pork."

Bill and Wally strolled toward the trap. Rabbits dodged between their legs or bumped into them in the blind scurry for water. Bill picked one up—it squealed and then lay quiet, panting.

"Skin an' bones," he announced, feeling it. And he added as an afterthought, "But in a couple of months his fur'll be a felt hat or a coney coat in America or Europe."

He let the animal go and watched it dash into the wire netting. Wally brought out their shotgun to stand the first watch

and keep off the kangaroos so that those reckless marsupials wouldn't break down the fence.

"I was thinkin' about Bat Harkin's girl," he announced casually.

Bill stuffed his pipe with sliced plug.

"They say she ain't no relation to Bat Harkin—that a old fossicker left her there when he died."

"I heard that," Bill agreed.

"But you saw her, didn't you. Blue eyes, shiny gold hair, pink cheeks. She's a grown up woman. An' they say she had a boy friend—young chap come through from America."

Bill nodded. He had heard the story.

"But Bat Harkin wouldn't have nothin' to do with the kid—said he hated Yanks," Wally continued. "An' so the kid, Dick Peters was his name, he says he's goin' out in the bush an' find gold or opal or somethin' an' come back an' marry Melva anyway. An' he went six months ago. Wouldn't write home for help—independent young devil."

"Who told you?" Bill asked.

Wally shifted the shotgun to a better position.

"Melva," he said briefly. "While you was fixin' the horses."

"Wanted us to go after him?" Bill asked.

Wally nodded.

"Told her we might if we got enough rabbits."

Bill smoked on complacently.

"Half a million square miles out beyond to hunt for him in," he estimated.

"I don't figure we'd need to go that far," Wally answered, "knowin' what kind o' rats Bat Harkin an' Burke Herbert is. Burke's had a standin' offer to marry Melva for five years."

"You reckon they'd do him in, eh?" Bill asked.

"Maybe old Bimgarri knows," Wally answered.

The drove of 'roos crept in closer. Wally pulled up the gun and sent a charge of shot over their heads.

"Don't know how long that Bimgarri's been here, do you?" he queried then.

Bill calculated.

"Three years."

"An' it was three years ago that Jack Burwell got his notorious murder mystery solved," Wally said. "Never saw the tracker that figured in it, did you?"

"Nope. Think they're the same?"

Wally shook his head.

"Don't know. Never saw that black an' never got a description of him. I just wondered, though."

Silence settled down over them again. Only the creaking of the rabbit wire disturbed the stillness. A faint wind was blowing.

But a few minutes later brought a call from the scrub.

"Coo—oo—ee! Coo—oo—ee!" came the shrill Australian cry of greeting.

Wally answered it promptly and said to Bill—

"I thought so—Bat Harkin."

Bill stoked the fire as the thickset form of the public house keeper emerged from the shadows.

"Cheerio," he called as he came into the firelight. Then his fleshy face wreathed in a smile as he recognized the two. "Oh, hullo," he said. "Didn't know you were here."

"Stopped at your pub on the way through," Wally rejoined. "Miss Melva said you were out fixin' the telephone."

Harkin stuffed his thick paws of hands into his trouser pockets.

"Oh, yeah." He nodded. "I was just drivin' back."

The talk passed on to other subjects regarding the long spell of drouth. It was only when Harkin was leaving that he remarked—

"Haven't seen that black devil doctor, have you?"

"He was there when we came this afternoon," Wally replied. "Lookin' for him?"

"No-o. I just thought maybe he cut that telephone line an' I wanted to see him about it, that's all."

"Is that why you came sneakin' up through the scrub?" Wally demanded.

Harkin scowled.

"It's my business, ain't it?" he snarled. But next moment he caught himself. "Sure, I left my car back a mile." He grinned. "That old devil always clears out if I don't. Guess maybe he heard me comin' as it is."

"You come back by way o' Bimbour?" Wally asked again.

Harkin eyed him.

"Anything happened?"

Wally was casual.

"Don't know that it has. Just wondered if Herbert would want to water his sheep down here, that's all."

"Guess not," Harkin answered. "He sold some an' he's only got ten thousand left. Got enough artesian water for them."

Wally nodded.

Harkin drew away.

"If you see Bimgarri, tell him I'm lookin' for him," he remarked.

AS THOUGH his wish were magic, the scrawny figure of the black rose from the darkness beyond the fire. Harkin gaped, and Bill and Wally started.

"You been listenin'?" Harkin snapped.

"Sure," Bimgarri answered naively. "That big flock cockatoo come along here yesterday. Cut that fellah telerphone wire plenty bad, I tell you." He pointed in the direction of the broken wire.

Harkin set his broad brimmed felt hat farther down over his eyes.

"Thought you went walk-about in bush?"

Bimgarri blinked.

"Me bin come back too soon, maybe."

Harkin's eyes glinted, but the old witch doctor stood firm, tense. One hand which had been behind his back now came slowly forward bearing a light, two-pound boomerang.

Harkin turned to the rabbiters.

"He's a liar," he said. "I'd have driven him out of the country if it hadn't been for Melva. Cuts my telephone wire an' uses it for spear points."

He ended with a sardonic chuckle and went off abruptly.

"Funny Bat Harkin would be drivin' around the country at this time o' night, ain't it?" Wally said when Harkin had passed out of hearing. "An' comes to Duffer Dam lookin' for old Bimgarri."

"Plenty devil-devil longa this place," Bimgarri remarked casually. "That devil too smart. Maybe come close up finish, bimeby."

Without another word he melted into the darkness.

Wally stood looking at the place where Bimgarri had vanished.

"Did you see that? He ain't no regular native. They'd carry fire-sticks at night to keep away devils."

"Yeh," Bill agreed.

"An' the old devil don't need no telephone, neither," Wally added. "Did you see those smoke signals this evenin'? He was likely at one end o' those—an' nobody but a black can read 'em, either."

"What do you figure has happened?" Bill inquired.

Wally shook his head slowly.

"I reckon old Bim has got his eye on things. He figures to use us somehow or he wouldn't have come here tonight. Maybe tomorrow, or next day; blacks take their beastly own time at things."

He threw the shotgun over his arm and wandered off into the night. While Bill tried to sleep, Wally sat down in the shadow of the earthen dike of the dam to wait and watch.

The moon rose, a brimming red mask of a face peering over the horizon. Now and then a rabbit splashed into the shallow water of the pond, or the netting creaked. A few dingoes yelped their wild dog cry in the distance.

An hour passed, then another. The landscape became a realm of ghostly lights and shadows. Wally listened. A faint, muffled sound came from up the scrub.

He paused just long enough to make sure and then pounced on Bill.

"Get up," he whispered. "They's a wagon comin' through the scrub."

Bill was on his feet like a shot, but

already Wally was off toward the sound. Bill caught him as they skirted the scrub, and the dark shadows of the trees laced about them as they ran. Wally headed out into the open through a patch of bare earth. The sound grew closer.

Wally came to a halt gasping for breath as he pointed to a dark mass beside a clump of bushes.

"It's a horse an' buckboard," he puffed as he fingered the trigger on his gun.

They went forward warily, shouted loudly, but no answer was returned. As they came nearer the horse whinnied and started toward them.

Wally seized the horse's head and Bill walked to the side of the buckboard. Next moment his cry made Wally jump to the wheels. In the bottom of the cart was a native, his mouth gaping open in the moonlight, dark bumps and splotches covering his face and throat. A sickening odor rose to their nostrils.

"Cripes!" Wally gasped. "It's a corpse."

The horse whinnied. Wally took the lead rein and started back while Bill walked behind the buckboard. They watered the horse and then brought a torch to examine the grisly find.

In the cart was a blanket stained with blood, a canvas water bucket, pick, billy can and flour bag. They lifted the dead black out on the blanket and placed him on the ground. His naked body showed cuts and bruises and blood encrusted wounds.

"Belonged to some white man; the chap went bush crazy an' killed the black, then he roamed off an' likely done himself in before he got to water." Bill pieced the evidence together bit by bit.

Wally grunted.

"Been dead a day or so—maybe two or three by the smell," he decided. "Some blokes go crazy like that in the bush—thirsty an' all."

He turned to gaze in the direction of old Bimgarri's humpey; a night fire burned brightly.

"The horse followed the rabbits toward water," he continued. "That old Bim wouldn't lead the horse in 'cause blacks are scared of dead men's spirits too much."

"What?" Bill asked.

"Might be robbery an' murder," Wally replied. "The white man maybe had some gold or opal with him."

"Did that kid Peters you talked about have a black?" Bill asked again.

Wally nodded.

"Melva said he took one from Bimbour Station. I don't know this one though—face too mauled up to tell. But blacks don't get caught nappin' very often. Maybe he had a visit from friends who turned out to be cutthroats."

"An' they done him in," Bill finished. "Then where's the other man—the white—if they was one?"

"Reckon we'll find that out."

Wally pulled the blanket up over the corpse, washed his hands at the water bag and then sprawled down in his bluey blanket beyond the fire.

Bill went to the wagon for a shovel.

"Might as well dig a grave while I'm watchin' the 'roos," he muttered.

Wally grunted and lay still.

He woke with the first gleam of the never-never dawn. Bill was keeping watch beside an open grave.

"No use buryin' it in a hurry," Wally said. "If a police trooper come along now there might be some questions if we'd hustled the job. Hard to tell how long a man's been dead after he's buried."

Bill met Wally's eyes steadily.

"It wasn't nobody as went bush crazy," Wally declared. "The black could have got away from that sort. An' if it's murder, then there's only Bat Harkin, Burke Herbert an' you an' I outside the blacks at Bimbour an' Wallaroo. The way the job is done might be blacks—clubbed to death."

He stalked off toward old Bimgarri's humpey.

"That was a fake fire," he said when he returned. "Bim stoked his fire with some knots that'd burn up once in a while just like somebody'd thrown wood on the coals."

In a few moments they had a fire lick-

ing around the billy can. They drank their tea and started toward the rabbit trap.

"Got to skin some rabbits to pay for our outfit," Bill remarked.

THEY found the pen a wild mass of animals—rabbits huddled together, climbing over each other. They drove some of the frantic creatures into a small pen at one side where Wally could pick them up one by one, break their necks and toss them to Bill whose sharp knife worked like a flash.

Wally stretched the skins on wire bows shaped like croquet arches, chased rabbits into the smaller pen, helped with the skinning when he had time.

At last Bill stood up, stuck his bloody knife into the ground and remarked—

"That's the last—an' I could eat another breakfast."

"About eighteen hundred in all," Wally estimated.

"Not bad," Bill admitted. "Four or five nights will give us our cash. Twenty-five or thirty quid a night ain't too bad."

The sun was bristling in a china-blue sky. Over a ridge of red rocks a pair of blacks were fixing the broken telephone wire. Wally watched them carefully and then scanned the landscape in all directions.

"Ain't no sign of a police trooper," he said. "Guess we better bury that corpse."

The rabbit skins were drying hard as shingles in the sun. They picked up the bundle in the blanket and let it down into the grave.

By the time they had carted off the rabbit carcasses, the sun was marking noon.

"We've got from now till sundown to follow the trail o' that buckboard," Wally announced.

"I reckon," Bill said grimly.

They saddled the horses and rode off to the point where they had found the outfit the night before. Mile after mile of crazy turns and loops and zig-zags they trailed the driverless horse and the wheeltracks. Once an automobile track crossed the trail—then the track began to fade. Sand and dust had drifted in; they followed it by fragments. Two miles on they lost it.

Wally drew up.

"Looks like it's leadin' back to Duffer Dam," he said. "But we can't follow the track for sure—looks like there's been two or three buckboards around here."

"The wind was blowin' hard day before yesterday," Bill suggested.

"An' the night before that," Wally added.

They were ready to turn back when Wally spurred his horse and rode to the top of a last rise where a clump of bushes stood. Bill followed him more slowly. Just before coming up to Wally he stopped.

"What do you make o' that, Wally?" he demanded at a rather bright piece of earth beside a long narrow trough.

Wally jumped to the ground.

"Fresh dirt," he announced. "Somebody started diggin', then shoveled the dirt back in again an' the sun an' wind finished it up like this."

Bill grinned.

"Looks like somebody started a grave, maybe. But they didn't finish it. Maybe old Bimgarri started to bury the black an' changed his mind."

Wally looked at Bill.

"That ain't funny," he said. "That's about it. Only if Bim started a grave, he'd finish it."

"Anybody dig for exercise around here?" Bill asked.

Wally glared at him.

They rode away. The sun settled into its fiery red sweep toward the west.

"That horse wasn't so thirsty when we found him," Wally remarked suddenly. "He must have had water a day before. An' it was a good idea of them boys to pick a windy night for their deviltry so's the trail was covered with dust by morning."

"What I can't understand is what's happened to Jack Burwell. Don't see any tracks," Bill retorted.

Wally pondered the question.

"Them was his tracks near the dam," he asserted.

And still later when they were crossing through the eucalyptus, clumpy leaved branches rising overhead, Wally spoke again:

"Too bad about young chaps like Dick Peters. They always figure the other chap's as square as they are."

Bill nodded.

"We had to learn, didn't we?"

"Yeh," Wally agreed, "but a bloke don't want to lose his life learnin'."

The sun was already below the horizon when they caught the first glimpse of Duffer Dam and their camp.

"Company while we were gone," Bill said, pointing to a motor car that stood near their wagon.

Wally spurred his horse and they hauled up beside the automobile's gray top. Wally sat on his horse observing their visitor. Burke Herbert glared up at them from his perch on the running board; one leg was bare to the knee, the other still had its shoe on.

"Howdy," Wally greeted him as Herbert clutched swiftly for his sock and shoe. "How come Burke Herbert, manager of the great Bimbour Station, is going wading?"

Herbert's felt-gray eyes went pink. Then his long jaw worked slowly on a cud of tobacco and he pressed one lip over the other to spit.

"Didn't know who'd come in here," he replied. "Telephone ain't been fixed for a couple days an' when the blacks told me, I thought I'd come over. Thought I'd measure the dam while I was here to see how much water she had."

"You going to drive sheep fifteen miles to water 'em over here?" Bill demanded.

HERBERT laced his shoe and stood up, a sly twinkle in his calm glance, his square face showing no blood under the bronze tan of the sun.

"The law allows it," he said as he stuck his thumbs into his pockets.

The rabbiters said nothing. Herbert eyed them.

"What's the matter with you two swaggies?" he sneered. "Been seein' ghosts?"

"Better not use that word 'swaggies' too often around here," Wally informed him. Then, without a trace of emotion on his face, he related the story of the corpse.

"An' we was wonderin'," he concluded, "if that black boy maybe belonged to young Dick Peters an' if they wasn't set on by somebody they thought was friends an' turned out to be dirty dingoes."

Herbert chuckled.

"Hell, Wally," he said, "you was always puttin' things together an' hatchin' 'em out like a piece o' fiction. Nobody seen nothin' o' that kid since he left me. I made inquiries for Melva a week ago all up an' down this section. He took a black boy from my station, but if he's mauled like you say, none o' us could o' recognized him. An' that buckboard an' horse ain't the outfit he had anyway—he bought a camel an' a lead horse."

Herbert climbed into his car.

"Likely young Peters got bushed," he said, "an' we'll find his bones out beyond somewheres in a year or two."

Wally smiled.

"Ain't you measurin' the pond then, after all them explanations?"

Herbert forced a grin.

"No hurry, seein' it's you boys. I wasn't needin' water for a couple days, anyhow. Catch all the rabbits you can—it makes that many less tryin' to climb through my fences."

"Wait a second," Bill said, as Herbert started the motor. "We almost forgot to tell you we found what looked like the diggin' for a grave up yonder. Know anything about that?"

Again Herbert glared. Then he drove off, jolting and bumping, without answering the question.

"We winged him a couple times," Wally declared evenly. "But he's got his alibi an' his explanation o' future events all in one piece."

Bill shook his head.

"I don't figure it out."

"I can't neither," Wally mumbled. "Wonder what that walrus wanted to wade the pond for, though."

Bill knocked the ashes out of his pipe on the iron tire of the wagon wheel.

"Look here," he began. "If you figure Herbert an' Harkin have got young Peters somewhere, we can go after him."

Wally grunted.

"If they killed the black, they wouldn't be such damn fools as to keep the kid around where some stray visitor might find him. They'd keep him hid—dozens o' shallow caves around this country. An' if we did run on to him, what good would it do? We got one shotgun between us with nothin' but bird shot. An' probably a dozen natives keepin' watch. An' if the kid knows too much, then they'd finish him."

Wally started taking off his saddle.

"Nope, we'll wait to see what old Bimgarri does next. Hang his wrinkled gizzard. If he'd talk we could do somethin'."

They took turns at keeping watch again that night. The next day and the one following, they made their harvest of rabbit pelts. Thousands of rabbits had come to the trap but the supply seemed endless.

"It gets my crust," Wally observed once, "the way that Herbert said 'Melva' without 'Miss' or anything. Cripes, you'd think he was mentionin' a black *gin*."

They watched for Bimgarri, but for three days he was gone. Then one morning they saw his black figure coming from the trees at a slow lope. In the gray dawn he was little more than a shadow.

He came up, grinning his wide, crafty smile.

"Bin make rain," he announced. "Plenty water come along this place soon. Fill up dam methinkit."

Then he sat down and very leisurely brought out an old pipe. Its bowl was partly broken off, its stem was a mere stub, but his black fingers curved around it, sinking into the bowl time after time. Wally disdained to notice the hint but Bill finally pulled out his tobacco pouch and tossed it over.

Bimgarri filled the pipe greedily.

"Plenty rain come longa this place now." He grinned as he lighted up.

Wally examined the horizon. A faint, shadowy haze was creeping up in the south.

"The old rascal has been making rain ceremonies," he admitted. "An' it might rain by the looks of that mist."

But Bill studied the old fellow.

"You know that police trooper Jack Burwell?" he demanded suddenly.

Bimgarri continued smoking.

"Don't know," he rejoined. "You know that fella?"

Wally chuckled.

"You can't even find out whether he's lyin'," he said.

Then he turned to the old black.

"Thought Herbert an' Harkin gave you all the tobacco you wanted?"

"No 'bacca," Bimgarri replied. He made movements with his fingers.

Wally looked at Bill.

"They cut off his tobacco about six weeks ago," he announced.

THEY turned to their work. Bimgarri continued to squat nearby, his black nature evidently much pleased at the sight of two white men at labor while he smoked contentedly.

When they had finished the last penful of rabbits, he strolled over to them.

"That fella bring sheep for water," he said, pointing toward Bimbour homestead.

Wally and Bill looked and saw a cloud of dust rising up over the hill. Next moment a pair of sheep appeared, coming toward them at a run. As they sighted the water they began bleating. Wally took time to curse roundly for a moment and then leaped about to help Bill gather up the rabbit pelts and pile them on the wagon. Bimgarri danced about wildly, then ran out to head off the lead sheep.

He succeeded in diverting the flock just long enough for the two rabbiters to save the skins they had gotten that morning.

Then the sheep broke toward the pond, bleating. A mob of a thousand or more clambered over the light fence. The posts gave way like tooth picks. The sheep behind pushed on those in front until they were piling over each other in the water. Two black herders poised on the distant slope of the hill, then turned and fled. Bimgarri grinned.

"That two fella too scared to come down here for to save sheep," he said.

Wally looked at him helplessly as he turned from watching the strangling, drowning sheep.

"You make magic for to scare those two natives?"

"Make devil-devil," Bimgarri replied evenly. "Chase that fella too fast."

Wally turned to Bill.

"Well, that little stunt has cost Herbert about a hundred sheep," he estimated as he looked at the dead animals.

But the flock was still struggling, still fighting to reach the pond. Wally and Bill tried to save as many as they could by dragging them from beneath the feet of the others. They worked until they were exhausted, but succeeded in saving only a dozen animals. Bimgarri stood by, watching them stolidly.

At last Bill and Wally paused—the sheep had all tasted water. Some of them were still drinking, others had gone off to search for a few nibbles of feed. Bill took out his pipe to smoke.

"I guess that ends it," he said. "These sheep won't let us put up this fence tonight, an' if it's going to rain, we'd better move on. Can't haul this wagon load o' skins out in the mud."

Wally considered a moment.

"If it's goin' to rain, what'd Herbert drive these sheep over here for?"

"Maybe he didn't know it was going to rain," Bill said.

Wally snorted.

"Hump! He got the telephone fixed an' probably found out it was rainin' south o' here last night."

"Plenty rain come," Bimgarri interrupted them.

Wally turned on the old fellow.

"You know that black boy belong this horse an' buckboard?" he demanded.

Bimgarri shook his head.

"Dunno—maybe. You know him?"

Wally groaned.

"You know that fella bin die?" he persisted.

"Maybe." Bimgarri was noncommittal.

Wally cursed and Bimgarri grinned. Wally was still mumbling under his breath when an automobile horn sounded back in the scrub. Burke Herbert rolled up in a cloud of dust.

"Sorry," he said. "Did you get the skins out of the way?"

Then he saw the dead sheep and his eyes fixed on the old witch doctor.

"You dirty black dog!" he shouted. "I told those boys to warn you the sheep were coming." He choked and advanced on the witch doctor. "But you got the fools so scared they won't come near you. You let a hundred and fifty sheep kill themselves."

His jaw clicked, his fists clenched and he made a wild lunge at the old black. Bill jumped in his way.

"Let him alone," he ordered. "What the hell right have you got bringing your sheep over here anyway? Law or no law, we were here first and this dam belongs to the government."

Herbert flushed. Perspiration beaded his brow under the wide brim of his hat.

"Righto," he agreed. "Righto. But I'll get that black devil one o' these days. He's lived off me for years, but he won't get out of this country with a whole hide if he don't leave now."

Bimgarri's skin seemed to turn darker at the threat, but he held his ground.

Herbert still eyed him as he put his hand into his pocket.

"I'll pay you boys for the fence," he said. "It's going to rain anyhow, so there won't be any more rabbitin'. If times wasn't so hard, I'd pay you a bounty on the rabbits."

Wally refused the money.

"Rain comin', is it?" he asked.

"Got the news over the telephone last night," Herbert replied.

"What's the hurry about waterin' the sheep then?" Wally demanded. "They looked as if they was just thirsty from a hard drive when they got here."

Herbert glared.

"That's why you birds never get to be station managers," he sneered. "Maybe it'll rain an' maybe it won't. I can't afford to take chances."

"That's right," Bill encouraged him. "A hundred an' fifty dead sheep ain't bad for chances."

Herbert scowled.

"Righto, my lads." He smiled crookedly. "Pay your own damages."

He crawled into his car.

They laughed as he roared away in the dust.

For a few moments they observed the sagging bank of the pond.

"That mob o' sheep certainly drinks a lot of water," Bill remarked.

"That one fella jumbuck fall over himself," old Bimgarri observed, as he pointed a crooked finger at a sheep that stood in the shallows trying to put its foot on some hummock beneath the surface of the water.

Wally looked from the sheep to the old black.

"Cripes," he muttered at last, "why didn't we look there before?"

HE MADE as if to pull off his clothes, changed his mind and stumbled into the pond toward the sheep. Bill stood on the bank waiting. Wally reached about under the water with his hands, his face stern.

"It ain't no corpse," he announced at last.

Bill waded into the pond until he reached Wally's side. The water stood above their knees.

"It's a sack," Wally said.

They bent down together, tugged and pulled and heaved at a sack which was apparently loaded with rocks. They dragged it out of the water into the dust.

Bimgarri edged over closer as Bill cut the bag open and reached inside to pull out a handful of what looked like cracked rocks. Wally washed the mud from one of the pieces and a low whistle sounded from his lips.

Bill's jaw dropped at Wally's exhibit. He seized another rock and washed it clean.

"Opal!" They spoke the word together.

They turned the stones about to get the glistening rainbow colors of the precious Australian black opal—peacock tints, greens, reds, yellows, blues burning and lighting like submerged fires. One piece after another they washed mechanically and set out side by side.

Suddenly Wally gasped and began throwing the pieces back into the bag.

"We're damn fools," he cried. "It's worth a fortune an' we're advertisin' it. What was old Herbert goin' to wade this pond for, if he didn't know about it? An' what'd Harkin come over for? Cripes—we'll prove it on 'em this time."

He lugged the mud smeared bag of opal matrix to their wagon, shoved it away out of sight under the dry rabbit pelts and then went back to drive the sheep around the pond in a circle until all traces of their find had been covered.

Then he halted as though shot.

"Hey," he whispered to Bill. "Wait—we'll fix up a dummy bag an' put it in there."

He dragged out an old sack, filled it with pebbles and rocks and waded out to drop it in the pond.

Old Bimgarri had evidently watched these performances with complete satisfaction. When all was finished he rose to his feet.

"You go longa bush now?" he asked. "Make new campsite? Come back tonight maybe?"

Wally spluttered.

"You old devil. You put that bag of opal there yourself. That's why you've been afraid of your life."

But Bimgarri's black feet were already

trailing off through the dust. They saw him take out various things from his humpey. He smeared white clay paint on his body and when he started out again he was equipped with two spears, two boomerangs, and a small tomahawk.

Bill shook his head.

"The old reprobate," he muttered.

Wally chuckled.

"So that was Herbert's trick, eh? An inch o' rain will fill this dam twenty-five feet deep. An' Herbert drove his sheep down here to hurry us off so's he could get down here tonight without anybody bein' around when he came pokin' in the pond to find the opal."

Bill nodded.

"Swell chance Herbert an' Harkin would have of findin' the opal if it once begins to rain and the dam gets deep."

Wally grew sober.

"Bill," he said. "You an' I are goin' to have a fight tonight. All we got is a shotgun, and there'll be a dozen natives an' two white men against us. But we're goin' to find out if the owner o' this opal died a natural death, or was done in. An' we're also goin' to find out if it's Dick Peters."

They worked efficiently.

"Gotta take this horse an' buckboard along if we like it or not," Wally said as he hitched the horse to the rear of their wagon.

Their outfit was loaded shortly. Then they climbed up to the seat and once more bumped off through the salt bush stubs.

"If we knew where Harkin was, maybe we needn't go down to his pub," Wally said.

"Better be sure," Bill replied.

They reached the pub late in the afternoon.

"Where's Melva?" Wally asked slowly.

But at his words she came around the rear wing, her bright face greeting them gladly.

"You've got the rabbits," she said. "And now you'll go to search for Dick?"

"That's right." Wally nodded. "Where's Bat?"

"He's been gone ever since the day you got here," she answered.

Wally's eyebrows raised.

They drove off a short distance to unhitch their horses and boil the billy for tea.

"Maybe Harkin isn't in on this deal," Bill suggested.

"More likely he's keepin' guard over his prisoner," Wally decided.

The sun was still an hour from setting when they rode off on the back trail to Duffer Dam. Heavy cloud masses now tumbled along the horizon and pushed up overhead.

It was dark when they reached the dam, tied their horses and crept up into the shelter of the earth dike to wait. A shower of rain drifted down as a promise of more to come. Minutes passed, a few sheep still huddled together near one side of the dam.

Then as the clouds lightened overhead for a moment, they heard the low mumble of voices and two dark forms appeared beside the pond.

"Wait," Wally whispered to Bill as he saw the latter move the shotgun.

NEXT moment they were buried under an avalanche of naked, slippery bodies. Wally carried two of his assailants with him as he scrambled to his feet, dashed them over his head and lashed about with his fists only to have another crowd clamber on to his back. The shotgun roared as Bill tried to bring it into use, but fingers that were like steel closed around his throat. Shouts and commands came from the two figures beside the pond. Bill brought up his knee and knocked one black senseless, but three others pounded down on him.

They were borne down in a heap by the sheer weight of the black bodies. Their throats pushed in by powerful hands, they felt themselves being tied in spite of their last desperate struggles to be free.

"Oh, hullo." It was Burke Herbert's voice and a flashlight shone on them as they lay bound and tied in the damp dust. "Fine mess, eh, Harkin?"

The two rabbiters blinked at the flashlight.

"What's the idear prowlin' around here at night?" Herbert taunted them. "Reckon we'd better turn you over to the police, eh?" His voice was hard. There was a tone in it that made Wally's blood run chill.

One of the natives picked up the shotgun and now stood over them. Both Harkin and Herbert wore holsters.

"So you murdered that black after all," Herbert jeered. "An' then you buried him an' fixed up your story so's to make out Harkin an' I did it, eh?"

"Never mind," Harkin said. "Come on, we've got to find that bag."

Harkin turned the light slightly so that it lighted up Herbert's sneering face. As he did so a faint thud sounded. The muscles in Herbert's face drew taut, he swayed, wheeled and fell. The flashlight quivered in Harkin's hand as Wally saw the sharp end of a heavy boomerang sticking in the back of Herbert's neck.

A wild yell rent the silence and a weird din began. The terrorizing noise shot past them like a bullet and then receded in the distance. The crowd of natives ducked as though a shrapnel had burst over their heads—then they faded out of sight like smoke.

Harkin's hand went for his gun at the instant a second boomerang wound itself around his neck. He swayed at the blow, caught himself as he fell and lurched to his feet.

As he staggered up a black hand pushed the keen point of a knife against his throat.

"Black devil!" he croaked. But he did not move.

Wally and Billy made out the features of old Bimgarri as he spoke. Very easily Bimgarri took Harkin's gun, and in a moment had cut Bill and Wally free.

"Plenty devil-devil longa this place." He grinned.

"Listen, this ain't my fight," Harkin begged even as they roped his wrists. "Herbert made me do it. I owed him money an'—"

Wally took the flashlight and bent over the prostrate Herbert. Slowly he drew out the deeply embedded point of a new needlewood boomerang. On its end was a sharp pointed steel needle made from a piece of telephone wire.

Harkin groaned.

"That fella kill black fella this time," Bimgarri remarked calmly. "Small time ago kill black fella. Small time ago kill also."

Bimgarri stood erect as though waiting a white man's judgment.

"Where's Dick Peters?" Wally demanded of Harkin.

"Over in the car," Harkin answered. Then he blubbered on, "This ain't my fight. Herbert made me do it. Dicky took one o' Herbert's blacks along with him an' when they was comin' back the black sent Herbert a smoke signal. An' so we jumped Peters that night. But he had the opal planted an' wouldn't tell. An' the black didn't know 'cause he'd been gone makin' the smoke signal when Peters buried his opal. Herbert killed the black boy poundin' him with a club tryin' to make him tell what he didn't know. An' he'd a'done in Dick if it hadn't been for me."

"An' the fact that he wanted the opal first," Wally snapped.

"Melva's my niece," Harkin pleaded. "Dicky won't want to marry no jailbird's niece."

"But you tortured the kid till he told you where the opal was?" Wally insisted.

"But it wasn't there. So we figured Bimgarri had seen those smoke signals an' spied on us. He dug it up after he'd buried it an' put it in the pond. One of our blacks saw him."

"Then we came," Wally suggested.

Harkin mumbled. But only when they reached the car did they understand his pleading. Two men lay bound and gagged in the rear seat. Dick Peters could only gurgle when they released him.

But the other victim cursed as only a police trooper can curse when he's been

maltreated, starved, dirtied and abused. Jack Burwell moved his tongue around in his mouth and wriggled his jaw to make talking easier.

"So you dug that grave up the hill?" Bill inquired.

"Sure I dug it," Burwell snapped. "I'd stopped to talk with this black scoundrel that day. Then when I saw those crazy wheel tracks I followed them, found the rig and the murder, and was burying the corpse when Herbert came along. He acted friendly and got the drop on me. Then he called in a gang of blacks and carried me off. Bimgarri never warned me, either."

BURWELL finished and advanced on Bimgarri, shaking his fist under the witch doctor's nose.

"Why didn't you get me out of this before? Why didn't you warn me about Herbert?"

For the first time Wally and Bill saw Bimgarri quaver before a white man.

"Please, boss," he begged. "That fella Herbert catch you longa grave. Drive like hell. Me can't follow. Me chase tracks all around. Walk plenty miles. Can't find. Walk more. No good. Me make rain. Herbert come here to catch opal before dam fill up. Me fix devil-devil. Scare off black fellas."

Bimgarri went suddenly mum. Burwell studied him a moment before he asked the next question—

"Just what happened to Herbert?"

Bill told him. Bimgarri was silent.

"You killed him with a boomerang?" Burwell demanded.

"Please boss," Bimgarri explained quickly. "That boomerang slip."

"Let me see that boomerang," The trooper's voice was stern. "I'll turn you in for murder yet."

Bimgarri handed over the weapon. In the dim light Wally and Bill could see that the steel spike had been removed!

Burwell bit his lip, fixed his glance quizzically on the old devil.

"We can call that accidental death in resisting arrest," he said as he handed back the boomerang.

"If it hadn't been for Harkin, Herbert would have done me in—and you too," Dick Peters gasped as his hands still stroked his throat.

His youthful figure swayed dizzily.

The long, wearing grind of days and nights in the never-never had put their mark on him. The torture had left him weak and haggard.

Burwell watched him. Then he turned to Harkin.

"Come on you. You aren't all bad. You ought to get off fairly easy."

Old Bimgarri mumbled to himself:

"That small tin cans tied on Sally kangaroo's tail make her go like hell, yes?" he inquired. "Make those black fellas run plenty, eh, boss?"

Bill and Wally laughed in spite of themselves.

"So that's why Melva used to find pieces of string tied to Sally's tail!" Wally laughed. "An' that infernal racket—"

"You give me 'bacca then?" Bimgarri inquired.

"Sure," Bill agreed.

Burwell held up his hand.

"Just a minute," he said. "I know you'll do it, but I want you to know that Bimgarri is the best black tracker in Australia. When he helped me solve that murder up in Queensland, I gave him tobacco and he kept out of my sight for these three years. If you give him enough tobacco to last a year, he'll duck again. And I want you to promise not to give him more than three days' supply at a time. I want to use him."

Dick Peters interrupted them again.

"There's going to be a wedding," he said. "You can fix all that then. We'll split the opal then, too—there's lots more where that came from."

Old Bimgarri chuckled to himself. He was carefully stuffing his pipe from Bill's tobacco pouch.

A Story of Old Colonial Days

ON THE PARISH

By WILKESON O'CONNELL

MINE host, Lawyer Saunders, and Mr. Marpent were engaged in their customary evening game of écarté in the taproom of the little waterfront tavern, when the door flew open and Benny Adair marched in. He was a lad of seventeen, the same age as pretty Sally Salters, the landlord's daughter, who stood washing tumblers behind the bar. She smiled at him in coquetry and welcome, to which he responded by sweeping the floor with a strictly imaginary plume. For Benny's wardrobe was as depleted as usual, although somewhat more than usually incongruous this particular tide.

It lacked hat, coat, waistcoat, and stockings. His bright hair was tied back with a bit of twine. Yet the fluttering rags of his shirt and pantaloons were belied by the insouciance and breeding of the slim, reckless face above them; as were the patches of his clumsy shoes by the great square silver buckles with which they were fastened. While around his bronzed throat lay a handkerchief that a lord might have used to flick the rappee from his velvet coat—a lovely thing of milk-white silk, delicately and brilliantly embroidered by the nuns of Cadiz.

Leaning carelessly over the bar, Benny rang a sovereign upon it, and spoke with

the exaggerated gallantry of a cavalier of the times; albeit one might have perceived the manner, in him, to be affected for the moment, rather than habitual.

"A tumbler of rum, sweet Mistress Sally," he requested, "as hot and sweet as your own red lips."

Sally giggled and turned to fill the order, while the three card players paused to regard the youngster, the kerchief and the coin.

"I see Sam Durand be again in harbor," deduced mine host from the combination of these phenomena.

"Aye, the thriftless loon," grunted Saunders peevishly. "Why couldna he ha' brought somewhat o' more worth and less value than yon vain kerchief to the raggle-taggle laddie?"

"That he did." Benny laughed. "Look here."

Thrusting his hand into a breeches pocket, he brought it out filled with gold.

"And what worth is that—to ye?" snapped the old Scotsman. " 'Twill only fly as merrily as your father's did, and leave ye no better—"

"Aye, so 'twill," interrupted Benny, with small show of respect. "Dost see that, Sal?" He held a sovereign up before her widening eyes. " 'Tis to purchase thee a gay flowered chinz from the stores of our good merchant, Master Marpent, yonder."

His condescending impudence would have enraged a less kindly man than Marpent, but the latter swallowed only amusement as he turned back to the game. Sally took the sovereign from between Benny's fingers, and dropped it into the pile that lay in his other hand.

"Keep thy money for thyself, Benny," she bade him. "Thee has greater need of it than me. Besides, Sam Durand will have a gift for me as well. You're not his only favorite. A piece of taffety, belike, or one of Indian muslin to make me shifts. Last time 'twas a roll of lace from Flanders, fine as the governor's lady wears . . . I'd best change this one at the till. Father—?"

She picked up the first coin Benny had thrown down, and waited for her father to get out the key. But instead he shook his head and pointed to the other sovereigns, whereupon she added it to them.

"Nay!" cried Benny in dismay. "I owe mine host for rum this half year past."

"Continue to do so," growled the innkeeper. "I'll not take a penny from Sam's gift to ye." He, also, returned his attention to the card table. " 'Tis your play, lawyer."

"Then of what use is it like to prove to me," wailed Benny, "if I can neither spend it, nor give it away?"

"Of no use, sirrah!" scolded Saunders. " 'Twas what I said before. Fling it into the harbor the now, and 'twill be gone but little sooner and no more thriftlessly than if ye squander it on fine gear, wassail and riotous living. Your father squandered his, and—"

"Nay, lawyer," interposed Marpent, "you're too severe on the lad. Ye always are."

And Salters added in a tone too low to be heard at the counter:

"Ye've no call, sir, to be throwin' his father up to him so continuous. After all, Wild Hal Adair was a fine, free handed gentleman as long as he had the blount. Generous as Sam Durand, himself. And all the planters gamble, drink and live high. 'Tis no disgrace to live as your neighbors do."

"Nor to cheat your creditors by dying, I suppose," answered the lawyer sharply, although he, too, lowered his voice. "Nor to leave your son a charge upon the parish."

" 'Tis a good lad," murmured the landlord soothingly. "I, for one, don't grudge the bread I give him."

"Nor your daughter, neither, I presume," said Saunders, still more waspishly. "They're cuddlin' mighty close over yon counter."

The innkeeper looked up with quick anxiety to where Benny and Sally were giggling confidentially over the bar.

"Nay," he admitted, "I would not carry my charity as far as that . . . Sal,

my girl, have a care for that third rum keg. The spiggot be a-drip."

Sally left her companion to obey her father, while Marpent narrowly regarded the boy, whose eyes followed her pretty figure.

"There'll be mischief there yet," he muttered; then added more loudly, "Benny, come here. I've somewhat to say to ye."

Benny sauntered across the room and lounged down upon one of the settles of the inglenook.

"Say on, my good man," he bade the merchant cheekily. "Benny Adair is ever at your service."

Marpent smothered another grin, while the lawyer spluttered forth a couple of disgusted "tuts".

"LISTEN, lad," said Marpent. "Ye be a prime favorite with Captain Durand. Why don't ye ask him to give ye a berth aboard the *Belleport Castle?*"

Benny's mood suddenly, and characteristically, changed to one of intense gloom.

"'Tis the one thing he will not give me," he replied.

"Nay, he willna *that!*" agreed Saunders for once. "And well ye know it, Meester Marpent. Never yet has he shipped a Belleport man—and why would that be, I wonder?"

His legal mind seemed to cling affectionately to the problem.

"'Tis a mighty mystery," said the landlord ponderously. "And him so open handed in all other respects."

Marpent spoke exclusively to the boy, with unaccustomed gravity in his tones.

"Benny, you are no longer a boy. You are a man, now. And 'tis time ye settled yourself, instead of idling away your days as ye do."

"I know it as well as yourself," returned Benny with mercurial irritability. "But what is there for me along this coast? I have no lands and hands to grow me a crop, nor learning in law or medicine to bring me fees. I have no means to purchase a commission, or even now I'd be in command of a company, as my father was at my age—as my father's son should be." He brooded bitterly a moment, and then went on, "No vessel of any size, save the *Belleport Castle,* puts in to this God and man forsaken harbor, and no man in the parish will offer me employment. Why, you, yourself, sir, would not give me a berth in the *Loyal Venture,* when ye sent her out of Wilmington last June. And well ye might have done so," he ended sulkily.

"But I thought to, lad," said Marpent in kindly conciliation. "And ye were not to be discovered, when I sent back word for ye to come down to Wilmington. Where were ye hiding during the month of June?"

"Not hiding — hunting," answered Benny drearily. "Up in the swamps on Albemarle. Eh, and I am as unlucky as I am unemployed."

"I always claimed yon damned canoe would be the wreck and ruin of ye yet," jibed the lawyer.

This acted as a fillip to Benny's sunken spirits—Saunders' crabbedness usually did—and he mocked him with a laugh.

"Among the other hundred-odd evils that you have prophesied await me."

"One of 'em's bound to overtake ye," averred Saunders, wagging a scrawny forefinger. "What's come of your infernal craft? Sunk at last?—please God!"

"Nay," said Benny, "she's tied safe to a pile of the dock yonder. I'll sleep in her tonight."

"Ye'd far better rest in my barn," sniffed Saunders, "with a roof over your head like a Christian."

"Like a Christian?" echoed Benny bitterly. "There's naught in my life that's like a Christian's." His spirits flagged as suddenly as they had risen, and he ended on a note of pure gloom, "I would I were in London."

"In London?" repeated the landlord. "That you don't! What ye complain of hereabouts be cakes and ale to what I endured as a poor and friendless lad in London."

"But, at least," rejoined Benny, "there

I might go on the road, take a purse, and join the renowned company of Claud Duval, Dick Turpin and Captain MacHeath."

"And be hanged for a rogue and a thief, as they were," snarled the lawyer. "There's a worthy ambition for ye!"

"Well," said Benny sullenly, " 'twould be better than lounging my life away, hunting and fishing in a land so raw that men carry rifles instead of purses." But, as usual, his temper recovered under Saunders' nagging. He went on gaily, "And, considered a-right, sirs, there are worse lots than that of a highwayman. His gains are large, in ready money, procured quickly and with little effort. He is given a military title without being burdened by the purchase of a commission. Those who meet with him evince, for the greater part, a most cringing respect, and assuredly he is sought after by all classes of society."

He slipped swiftly across the room to lean again upon the bar.

"What say ye, Sal? Wouldst thou flout me still, should I appear before ye in jackboots, a fine red coat, and with a pocketful of yellowbirds that other men had netted? Zounds, girl, then thou wouldst adore, rather than tilt thy pretty nose up at me!"

She tilted it then in laughter at his play-acting, but her eyes were humid as she leaned forward to whisper too low for the others to hear—

"Thee knows, Benny, I would love thee no better so, than I do now."

"Lord, what a ruffler!" exclaimed Marpent, openly showing his amusement. "I'm rejoiced that we do thus dwell in a 'raw' land, where our gain is, and is like to remain, our own."

"Aye," agreed Saunders, "or we could hardly rest in peace o' nights, for fear of you bold robber, Captain Adair."

" 'Tis mighty well, landlord," Marpent pursued the jest, "that ye keep those pistols handy over the fireplace."

"Though I misdoubt they've been primed, or the powder dried, this half year past," interjected Saunders.

"Nay, I attended to that only this morn, myself," denied mine host; then, with a huge wink, and jerk of the thumb toward the flushing, badgered Benny, "Some one was walkin' on my grave, belike."

The boy turned for sympathy to Sally.

"Ye see how I'm treated, Sal?" he asked wistfully. "*They* flout me, if you do not."

She leaned sweetly forward to lay a hand on his forearm, which he covered with his other hand. The landlord saw the gesture and interrupted hastily.

"Sal, my girl, that tap be leakin' again." When he had seen his daughter well away from Benny, he again swung to his cronies. "It all comes," he proclaimed discontentedly, "o' that Newgate Calendar that he dug out o' my wife's old leathern box. Books fill a lad's head with a deal o' nonsense mostly."

"Not if they be good ones," said the Scotsman, who, like all his countrymen, had been well educated. "Benny's studies would improve him mightily, if he'd turn his attention to serious works, instead of wasting it on playbooks, romances, and yon vain histories o' buccaneers and highwaymen."

Marpent laughed.

"Neighbor, ye may lead a horse to water, but ye cannot make him drink. For six months Benny's had my account of the taking of Panama by Sir Henry Morgan, but he returned Dr. Franklin's 'Almanac' in half a day."

Mine host pivoted about toward the door.

"Thunder and blazes, what passes without!"

A CONFUSED burst of men's voices raised in greeting had called forth the exclamation. The door was flung open to allow a big, bluff, red faced man to stride in.

He wore the blue cloth of a seaman, sea boots, a cutlass at his side, the authoritative air of a master, and a grin of pure delight. He carried a dufflebag, but dropped it by the door, so that he might have both hands

free to extend to the company. They all —save Benny, who stood aside with a look of proprietorship—saluted him with one voice. "Master Durand!"

"Aye, aye, neighbors," he answered heartily. "Home again, and at your service!"

They converged upon him, babbling together.

"Well, well, well! This *is* a sight for sore eyes!"

"Ye've been gone a rare long voyage this time, Samuel!"

"Welcome home, master, welcome home! Have a drop on the house; do, now!"

He tried to shake hands with all at once, and to answer their greetings as rapidly.

"Marpent, my good friend! . . . Aye, lawyer, it's many a watch since last I crossed Belleport Bar . . . Landlord, I shouldn't object. And send the black boy out with half a dozen tankards for the thirsty throats on the dock . . . Lord, Lord, 'tis little Sally! What a rare fine wench she's grown! The lads come to the tavern now, I wager, for more than a punch of rum or flagon of brown ale, eh, Sally?"

She blushed, dimpled, curtsied, but found no more to say than—

"Lord, sir!"

"Dinna talk to the lassie in such fashion, Samuel," bade Saunders testily. "Ye'll have the head turned clean off her shoulders. God knows the young ones of this benighted day are already daft enough with folly and vanity, without encouragement on your part."

Durand winked at Sally.

"Wait, lass, till he sees what I've got for ye, and he'll go on worse than old Ecclesiasticus, himself, on the topic of vanity."

He retrieved the dufflebag, and laid it on the card table, while they all gathered around him, Sally hovering with clasped hands at his shoulder. From the top he drew a pelisse of crimson velvet, lined with gold colored satin, and fastened with a jeweled clasp three inches in diameter. It was sadly crushed from such packing, but a queenly garment still. Sally's blue eyes widened, and she gasped with incredulous delight when he threw it across her shoulders.

"Oh-h-h-h! That, for *me?* 'Tis far too fine for the like of me! Oh, sir, I can never thank ye!"

"Buss me, lassie," chuckled Durand, "and I'll be in your debt."

There was no call for Saunders' glare of disapprobation, for the kiss exchanged was as paternal and innocent as if it passed between Sally and Salters himself. Durand held her chin in his hand, after the caress was over, looking down into her face with kindly gravity.

"Ye're a sweet lass, Sally," he told her, "and bid far to become a true and loyal woman. Take heed ye do not disappoint us." He turned again to the dufflebag. "Now, here's a trinket for our good Marpent. A snuffbox made, I'm thinking from the workmanship, in France, though it bears the Spanish arms." He winked, as at some well known jest, and they all laughed uproariously. "The rappee's spoiled by sea damp," he went on, "but landlord, here, will fill it up with fresh, that's better than any I could buy abroad. Lawyer, your buckles are much too small for the Paris mode. I've brought ye a pair a London macaroni might approve. Look at that, sir—four inches of pure silver from one bulwark to t'other. Now the lassies' eyes will follow when ye walk into church of a Sunday! . . .

"Landlord, a silver tankard for your own use, and I've a dozen kegs of rum aboard that I picked up for ye in Barbados. 'Tis not so good, in my opinion, as that which comes from Jamaica, but 'twill serve, 'twill serve—your guests, at least . . . Fine stuffs, all of them, sirs, and not worth the less because they've paid nary a heed nor a penny to our good King George."

Again he winked, and they responded as before. He sat down on a settle, his knees wide apart, his hands resting on them, while he beamed in high good humor on the company.

"Now, don't ye trouble me with

thanks," he ordered, "but tell me all the news of Belleport this twelve-month past. Lord, lord, but it's good to be in again!"

Marpent beamed as broadly in return.

"Well, Sam," he answered, "the greatest news is that we've gone into your own line of traffic."

"That we have," confirmed Saunders, "lock, stock, and barrel."

"All the town," added mine host, "and half the parish."

"My line?" queried Durand. "That's the sea. What mean ye, sirs?"

"The Spanish trade, Samuel," said Saunders, "the Spanish trade."

"Ye see, Sam," explained Marpent, "ye've been so successful at it that, when the *Loyal Venture* merchantman came to my notice a few months back, I thought it worth our while to charter her—"

"Load her to the gunwales with tobacco—" interrupted the lawyer.

"And send her flying past his Majesty's men to Lisbon," finished mine host.

"Every man, woman, and infant in Belleport," went on Marpent, "has a share, or some part of one, in her."

"Except me," interjected Benny morosely, but no one paid him any heed.

"And we all look to be rich as princes, when she comes in this month or next," finished Saunders.

Durand threw back his head and roared like the morning surf.

"Ho-ho-ho, here's enterprise with a vengeance! To think of my decent, quiet, godly neighbors taking up with the Spanish trade! I'd never have guessed ye to be such desperate gamblers." He turned to take a smoking tumbler which Sally had just brought to his elbow. "Well, gentlemen, here's luck and a safe arrival! May the *Loyal Venture* prove one of a hundred per cent. profit to her backers."

HE DRANK, and returned the tumbler to Sally, who retired to the bar, there to continue her flirtation with Benny, spreading wide the gorgeous cloak, gloating over its splendor, peacocking before his admiring eyes. Marpent resumed—

"Ye give it your approval then, Sam?"

"That I do!" answered Durand heartily. "The trade is risky, but the profits override that objection—if you're willing to gamble. Who's your master?"

"Captain Collin Hoke, of Wilmington," said Marpent.

"Colly Hoke?" Durand's voice changed suddenly. "Nay, that's bad—bad!"

"How's that?" demanded Saunders with quick suspicion. "Is he no honest?"

"Or unused to the tricks of the trade?" asked Marpent.

"Neither, sirs," returned Durand. "Honest as the North Star, and practised as myself at outwitting his Majesty's officers. But—he's dead."

"Dead!"

It brought the three shareholders to the feet that shook in their boots.

"Aye," said Durand, "of a spotted fever in Lisbon, some three months past."

"Sam," asked Marpent in great agitation, "are ye sure of this?"

"There's no shadow of doubt, neighbor," regretfully replied the captain. "I heard it in the Azores from Captain Nathan Ames of Nantucket. He'd stood watch by Colly's sickbed, and closed his eyes at the last. And he gave me this—" drawing a clumsy brass repeater from his waistcoat pocket—"to carry back to the widow in Wilmington."

The settle groaned under the collapse of the landlord's frame.

"This be fearful news!"

"Every penny I had saved was in that bottom," said Saunders solemnly.

"And my credit was strained to the breaking point to outfit the vessel," added Marpent.

"'Twill bankrupt the whole parish," prophesied mine host, "if she come not to port."

"Now, hold hard, neighbors," protested Durand. "The ship's not lost because the master's dead. Who did ye consign the tobacco to?"

"One Pedro de Sabraon," answered Marpent. "He was highly recommended."

"And justly so," nodded Durand. "I

know the man. He's honest as any Portuguese, and'll serve you faithful as long as he serves himself. The cargo's safe, sirs."

Marpent spoke eagerly.

"How do you make that out, Sam?"

"Why," explained the captain, "he'll want, not just one load of the weed, but as many as ye can get to him. Therefore he'll pick a new master—they're thick as peas along the Lisbon waterfront—and dispatch her home heavy ladened, for to encourage ye to go on trading with him. There's many a factor, I allow, who wouldn't be that farsighted, but not this De Sabraon. He's a head as long as a ship's cannon, and is said to be able to see around a corner. Aye, in my opinion, ye may count the *Loyal Venture* as safe—save from such mischances as storm, shipwreck, pirates, and the King's excise men."

"Lord, lord, yon's fine hearing!" chittered Saunders. "Ye had my heart between my teeth, Samuel."

Marpent laughed with the same nervous relief.

"Mine no less," he admitted.

Durand beamed on them benignly.

"Now I've relieved your minds, is there naught else in which I can serve ye?"

"Yes, Sam, there is," confessed the merchant. "Have ye no berth for Benny Adair aboard the *Belleport Castle?*"

"For God's sake give it him, sir!" groaned the landlord. "He hangs around Sal till I'm nigh mad! . . . Sal, girl, give an eye to that tap."

Sally dropped a last curtsey to Benny, and turned toward the range of kegs, while he sauntered over to the ingle.

"Why, father," she exclaimed in vexation, " 'tis as tight as a stay and dry as an old bone!"

"What's that'twas said about the *Belleport Castle?*" inquired the boy. "Have ye a berth for me at last, sir?"

Durand was visibly embarrassed.

"Nay," he denied. " 'Twas these gentlemen that spoke of it, not I."

"But why not, Sam?" urged Marpent. "The lad's a good lad, and ye'd find a deal of use for him aboard ship."

"I willna go so far as to assert he is a *good* lad," said Saunders with Caledonian caution, "but I may admit he might be a worse one." Benny swept him a bow to the floor for the compliment. "He's no so very respectful to his elders, but a touch of ship's discipline, rubbed in with the cat, would correct that. And I will say he is bold as he is hardy—and ye couldn't kill him!"

"Valuable qualities, I take it," added the landlord, "in your line o' traffic, Master Durand."

"Aye, aye," hesitated the captain. "But—"

"If ye'll consider it, Sam," interrupted Marpent, "I'll see he is provided with gear and a chest."

"And I'll engage to furnish him with a suit of seacloth," said Saunders, adding hastily, "that is, if Marpent willna charge me too highly for the goods. 'Twill serve ye better, ye scallion," he turned on Benny, "than the silks and velvets ye're forever hankering after."

"I'd rather wear such than the robings of the King of Spain!" cried Benny excitedly. "Will ye not take me, Captain Sam? I'll serve ye faithful, I vow I will!"

"Well, well—" wavered Durand. "Nay—'tis impossible!"

Benny's face fell a fathom.

"Why not, sir?" he demanded in a passion. "In God's name, why not!"

" 'Tis not fit traffic for your father's son to be in, that's the truth," declared the captain flatly. "For, sirs, Benny *is* the son of a true and loyal gentleman, and what am I? In plain English, a smuggler—that is to say, a thief. I rob but one victim, it is true, but that victim is my King. 'Tis a sorry trade, sirs, and why I take no young boys aboard my ship. Older men, already set in the course of sin, I'll have to man her, but not some youngster, who might otherwise live honest."

HE WAS JUST a thought too virtuous in these asseverations. Palpably they but served him as an excuse. Benny shrugged disconsolately.

"Faith, I am like to be the only honest

man in Belleport, after the *Loyal Venture* comes in," he commented disrespectfully. "Ye might turn another penny, gentlemen, by showing me in a raree show as a curious antiquity." Before Saunders could recover his temper, or Marpent his calm, he had directed his impudence toward the captain. "If ye will not sign me on, Captain Sam, I'll stowaway, and what'll ye do then?"

"Maroon ye on the first key I came to," answered Durand promptly. "Now, I mean it, Benny. Mind that!"

There was a strange, stern grimness to his tone, utterly at variance with his familiar geniality. They all glanced at him curiously, but before any one could speak, the door was pushed open and a man stumbled in. He was a wild looking creature, naked save for a pair of breeches that were ripped to ribbons halfway up the thigh. These dripped with water, as did the dank black hair that streamed about his haggard face and moisture wrinkled shoulders. His eyes glared insanely through the elf locks, and his blackened lips were encrusted with salt. A waterfront loafer thrust his head through the door and called:

"Here be customer for ye, landlord, if ye can make out what he's after. Blamed if us all can."

The stranger staggered to the table, seized the silver tankard, tilted it high and, when no liquor was forthcoming, sent it crashing to the floor, while he stood swaying, his mouth working horribly. Durand's lips imitated the motion.

"Wa - wa — water," he worked out. "Good God, the man's been wrecked and is dumb with drouth!"

Marpent sprang to support the reeling figure to a settle.

"Quick, Sally!" he shouted. "A beaker!"

"Nay, Sal, bring but a rum tumblerful!" countermanded Durand. "If he's allowed to drink his fill, he'll founder himself."

Sally flew, and Durand held the small tumbler that she brought him to the man's lips, letting him drain it slowly.

"Now, another, lass," he ordered. "Keep 'em coming, slow but steady . . . Roll it in your mouth, mate. Wash out the taste of the brine. Lord, the poor wretch's flesh is that water withered 'tis like a wintered apple! He must have been in soak for many hours to come in such a pickle."

"Landed on the Banks, belike," suggested mine host, "and had to swim across the bay."

At this the man looked up and nodded his head. The glare was fading from his eyes, as Sally brought him glass after little glass of water. He hitched himself into a more upright position on the settle and gazed about him intelligently.

"That's right, mate, take heart o' grace," encouraged Durand. "Ye've made port at last . . . 'Tis certain sure he's had no more bread of late than he's had drink. Good brown ale is both, so after ye've given him this last tumblerful, Sally, go draw a stoop of your father's strongest brew . . . How long have ye been castaway, mate? One day? Or two? Or three? Or—"

As he counted Durand raised one finger after another of his right hand, and at the third the man nodded. Sally came with the ale, but his eyes did not leave Durand's face, even as he gulped the liquor. He seemed to find something memorable there. Durand saw fit to remove the tankard from his hands, albeit not without a little difficulty.

"Take breath, man, take breath," he admonished.

"The poor creature's fair ravening," commented Marpent pityingly.

"Ye hold the tankard, Sally," suggested Durand, handing it to her: "Let him sup four swallows, then take it from him while ye count ten. He's like to keep it that way, but left to himself 'twould be but down and up again—ho-ho! I'll lay ye've never been tended by a fairer cup bearer, eh, mate?"

But the man's strange look did not shift from his own, even though Sally's pretty face was so much nearer. Benny stared,

and rubbed his belly with a circular motion, all boy for the moment.

"Three days without bite or sup—ow-oo!"

" 'Tis the common lot of those who seek their bread upon the waters," said Saunders sententiously. "Yon's a treacherous element."

"Well are we bidden to pray for those who go down to the sea in ships," added Marpent in a low tone.

"Look yonder, lad," bade Durand, also serious, "and think less hard of me for denying ye such a fate as that man has suffered."

"Well, he's come through alive," protested Benny.

"There's more that don't," answered Durand. "None ever hear the most horrid tales of the sea."

"Nor," pointed out Benny, "is this the common lot of all who sail. Were you ever in such a desperate case, Captain Sam?"

"Aye, once," replied Durand to Benny's discomfiture. "Three days and four nights I clung to a spar, after the *City of Newport* went under. Pah! I can taste the salt yet!"

There was a moment's pause, while Sally counted conscientiously and the rest gazed upon her charge.

"I wonder what his story is," pondered the lawyer.

"He'll be able to tell it in a minute," said Durand. "There's a bit of color again in his face. Some mischance on a hidden rock, or meeting with a sudden squall, no doubt."

But the man shook his head.

"Ye were not shipwrecked then?"

Another negative.

"Did ye miss your footing in the shrouds? Or were swept overboard by a comber? . . . Blest if I can make out what could have happened to ye, mate!" And Durand scraped his chin in a puzzle.

"Mayhap he was cast overboard of a purpose," suggested Saunders.

"That must be it, of course," agreed Durand, "since the ship was not lost."

THE CASTAWAY drained the last drop of ale, and suddenly croaked in a hoarse and raucous whisper.

"The ship *were* lost!"

"But not wrecked?" queried Durand, still unable to read the riddle.

"Aye," answered the man, "scuttled."

"Pirates!" they ejaculated; and Benny leaned forward, his eyes ablaze.

"Aye, mates, pirates." There was tone in the voice now, though it came through a painful effort. "The finest vessel I ever had gone to Davy Jones, and her cargo into the hull of the sea robbers!"

"But ye fought the ship, sir?" demanded Benny eagerly. "As well as ye were able?"

"Aye—but what could eighteen seamen, with only the knives on their lanyards and a belaying pin or two, do against ten ruffians armed with cutlasses and pistols enough to outfit a regiment o' foot?"

Benny's enthusiasm visibly cooled.

"Ye outnumbered them, then—and surrendered?" he inquired scornfully.

"Nay—" began Durand, and then thought better of his words.

The man's wild gaze returned to his face, and fastened there.

"Nay, we fought," he croaked, "till every one of us were either dead or trussed like a fowl for roastin'. If ye call that surrender, younker—well, be damned to ye! They hauled us aboard their vessel, after scuttlin' mine, and at last marooned us on a barren key, leavin' us to live on shell fish and worm eaten biscuit till another ship should pass that way. As it's well off the course to either Spain or the Indies, we might ha' rotted into our graves afore any sighted us."

"But how came ye here, sir?" asked Sally.

"By the pirate ship herself, mistress. Unlike most seamen, I can swim. So after dark, the day they put us ashore, and afore they got under way, I swum out to their vessel, and climbed into the martingales. There I clung till early this morn, when I sighted land through the froth o'

the billows. I reckoned it to be main close, so I let go and swum ashore—to find I'd landed on a waterless sandbank."

He gulped, shuddering with the memory.

"Poor soul! Poor, poor soul!" cooed Sally. "And since then, sir?"

"I've been makin' my way to this here settlement," he answered, "which I could see across the bar. All day it's took me—walkin', swimmin', wadin', and restin' on every rock that showed above the tide."

Sally patted his bare shoulder in commiseration, to the obvious displeasure of both Benny and the lawyer; Benny's, because he seemed have taken a dislike to the stranger; Saunders', because he, himself, liked the girl more than was becoming in a man of his years.

"Do I understand ye were captain of the lost vessel, sir?" asked Marpent.

"Aye—I be Sinclair Dykman, master, sailin' out o' New York harbor."

"And your ship was—?"

"The *Loyal Venture.*"

"No, no; not that!" screamed Marpent.

"God ha' mercy on us all!" ejaculated Saunders woodenly.

Dykman looked from one to the other.

"Ye be the owners, then? And this be Belleport?"

Durand, even more deeply agitated than the others, seized him roughly by the shoulder.

"I tell ye, man, it can not be the *Loyal Venture!*" he shouted. "It must not be the *Loyal Venture!*"

Dykman drew away from him, rising to his feet as he did so. He stood steadily upon them. The warmth had dried and shrunk his skin, the liquor restored a certain measure of vitality. His voice, though still hoarse, was clearing. He now appeared as a powerful hulk of a man, if still far below his usual strength. Durand's look leaped in sudden recognition.

"And I tell it were the *Loyal Venture!*" declared Dykman, more angrily than there seemed need for. "The ship I took over when Captain Hoke died in Lisbon. And, what's more, I've come to tell your townfolk the name o' the man who sunk her!"

"Who was it?" cried three voices, and Dykman thrust a forefinger full into Durand's face in reply.

"There he stands," he answered. "Sam Durand, the pirate."

"He's crazed," said Benny, very quickly. "Gone daft with hunger and suffering."

"Aye, that's it, poor fellow," agreed Marpent.

"Landlord," said Saunders peevishly, "can ye not feed him, and bed him away for the night? We've other matters to consider the now, and canna be troubled with his vaporings. Every penny I had saved!"

Dykman was plainly staggered.

"Ye don't believe me?"

"How can we?" asked Marpent. "We all know Sam Durand—"

"Ha' known him since he was a wee'n," interjected Saunders.

"And so know that he's no pirate."

"Nay, he gives instead o' robbin' others," confirmed the landlord. "Ask any man in the parish if this be not so."

"But I tell you I saw him—saw him with my own eyes—shoot my quartermaster through the head!" shouted Dykman hoarsely. "And the *Belleport Castle* lies this minute out beyond that bar, loaded to the gunwales with *your* goods!"

"Sally," said mine host, "bid Marty make up a fire and cook a mess o' those fish that Benny brought in this morn. We must fill him, or he'll turn bedlam violent presently."

Dykman made a gesture of enraged despair.

"Ye've brought your pigs to the wrong market, Master Dykman," said Durand with amused contempt. "These be my good friends and neighbors. They'll never credit the paltry, tawdry lie ye lay against me."

"By God, they shall believe it!" swore Dykman. "I'll prove it beyond the shadow of a doubt!"

"How?" inquired Benny, vastly scornful.

"By the coat on his back," replied Dykman. "'Tis mine. He stripped it from me with his own hands, and ye'll find my name writ on the inner side of the collar band."

"Show him the coat, Sam," suggested Marpent. "Mayhap 'twill quiet him."

"Aye, do," said Saunders, "and clear ye of all suspicion."

Durand thrust his hands deep into his breeches pocket, but made no move to comply with these requests.

"Nay, neighbors," he protested easily, "'tis too early in the season for me to be going in my shirt alone."

"Ye see," croaked Dykman, "he dares not." He looked at Durand considerингly. "But I'll assist him to it."

With stupendous speed he sprang forward to land a stunning blow on the point of Durand's chin. The latter instinctively withdrew his hands, and as he swayed, dazed as much by surprise as by the blow, Dykman ripped the coat from his shoulders, and tossed it to Saunders.

"There—ye seem to be a man o' more sense than the rest o' these kine—read what ye find there."

Saunders, his eyes glued to the collar band, mouthed his words stupidly, mechanically.

"'Sinclair Dykman' — Sinclair Dykman! Why—why—'tis here!"

"And here's the man who would not spare the venture of even his own kin and townfolk," added Dykman.

Durand spun to face him.

"Nay, and that *is* a lie!" he answered savagely, but turned again to his friends, appeal in his tones. "Neighbors, ye *know* I'd ne'er have lain to windward of that craft, if I'd had hint for whom she sailed! I never even knew her name—"

"Ye hear?" interrupted Dykman triumphantly. "He admits it."

"Sam Durand," muttered Marpent dazedly. "Sam Durand—a pirate?"

"Every penny I had saved," groaned the lawyer, and then he scrambled to his feet, shouting, "Secure the door! We maun take him!"

"Take him?" cried Benny, outraged. "After taking his gifts!"

"Aye, lad, 'tis the way of all the world," Durand answered him grimly, as he drew his cutlass. "But ye'll not do it scathless, neighbors!"

Dykman advanced upon him with an upraised chair.

"Call in those roustabouts without," he ordered. "I'll engage him till they get here."

The landlord started for the door, but Sally flung herself about his neck, clinging tenaciously and screaming:

"Father! Father! Ye can not do it!"

BENNY leaped to the settle seat and seized the pistols hanging over the chimney breast.

"Stop!" he yelled. "Stop, I tell you!"

There was an involuntary pause as all turned to face the shifting barrels.

"The first man who lays a hand on Sam Durand gets a bullet in the brain and the next one another through the belly!" Then the pirate fell from his tongue, as he said swiftly, planning as he spoke, "Captain Sam, my canoe is locked to the corner pile at the end of the pier. Walk down to her—slow—and loose the chain. I'll hold these gentry in converse till she's free, and then I'll join ye. We can make the *Belleport Castle* in her with ease, before they're done convincing the honest lads outside that ye do sail under the Jolly Roger."

After a curious look at his sudden champion, Durand nodded and quietly walked out the door. Dykman made a movement to follow him, but was checked by the weapon in Benny's right hand.

"Hold hard, there, Captain," suggested the boy. "I've a bit to say before ye leave this tap." But it was to the rest of the company he addressed his remarks, flavoring them with a slightly hysterical contempt. "Sirs, in my opinion, ye are as stupid a covey of buzzards as ever fouled their own nest. All his life Sam Durand has been a warm friend and a good neighbor to ye, but ye'd send him to Execution Dock. What if he did scuttle the *Loyal*

Venture? Ye'd only to stand by him—ye'd only to misread that label, Lawyer Saunders, or fail to find it at all—and the cargo would have been quietly landed from the *Belleport Castle* into your own warehouses."

Saunders started, and exhanged a look of dismay with Marpent and the landlord.

"Aye, ye know it's true!" asserted Benny passionately. "For Sam Durand truly loved this town and—and—and the rotted, louse souled people thereof!"

His voice steadied, and he went on philosophically:

"But, the joke's turned where it should—on the parish. Landlord"—again the pirate swaggered through his tones—"I'm leaving. When I come back 'twill be for Sally. And if I find ye've given her to any whippersnapper planter, or"—his eyes rolled ferociously on Saunders—"lean old lawyer, I'll cut that man's heart out of his body, and eat it beating! Sally, has Captain Sam loosed the canoe yet?"

She peeped through the door.

"Yes, Benny, 'tis floating free o' the dock, and he sits with the paddles in his hand."

Benny laughed exultantly.

"He's waited for me then! I feared he wouldn't. 'Tis time for me to go."

He leaped over the settle end and backed toward the door—which Sally had flung wide behind him—still threatening with the pistols. His *adieux* were voiced with the imperturbable impudence that, since his father's death, had made him the pet and the pest of the township.

"Gentlemen, if any come asking for Sam Durand or Benny Adair, bid them direct their inquiries to Ocracoke Inlet. Whoop, bullies! Here's luck! A bloody voyage and a golden cargo!"

He fired a pistol into the ceiling, snatched a kiss from Sally's lips, and sped like a deer over the threshold. She slammed the door, spreading herself against it to hinder further egress.

Though the joke was on the parish, Benny was so no longer. He had gone—for a pirate.

Flying Art Gallery

By SAMUEL TAYLOR MOORE

WHEN Miss Neysa McMein, the artist, enlisted as a Y. M. C. A. entertainer with the American Expeditionary Forces she carried with her a most unusual mascot. It was a dinosaur. Its name was Gertrude and for euphony's sake Miss McMein called it—

"Gerty, the dirty dinosaur."

Of course, it wasn't in the flesh. With a wave of her magic wand—paint brush or crayon—Miss McMein would create Gerty on an easel and then relate to appreciative khaki clad audiences the shameless career of her pet. With Miss McMein traveled another girl artist whose name slips me at the moment. She frequently headlined with Miss McMein, and her *chef d'œuvre* was an elephant rampant, with forehoof raised to crush a tiny bug that cried, comic art style—

"*Kamerad.*"

Perhaps you enjoyed the entertainment of the two lovely girl artists in France.

In August of 1918 the young ladies were touring the Y. M. C. A. canteens in the Toul sector. One evening they were

invited to dine with the officers of the Sixth Balloon Company at a position on the Front near Domêvre-en-Haye. It was a jolly dinner party with just enough of the tinge of danger to appeal to the feminine instinct. Dinner over, the girls expressed regret that they could not repay the courtesy with an exhibition of their art. They had not brought their tools of labor with them.

Duke Ovitt, the commanding officer, replied that the deficiency could be supplied. He summoned his non-coms and ordered that they produce, from somewhere, brushes, paint and canvas. The brushes were easy, for every balloon mechanic carried a supply for cementing patches over bullet holes in the balloon. From somewhere a sergeant produced a can of red paint. I suspect it was "borrowed" from a nearby camouflage unit attached to the corps artillery. Fine! But what about a canvas?

At the far end of camp, bedded down with sand bags after its daily tour aloft, reposed the inflated balloon, a whale in fabric.

Of course, the chemicals in the paint might cause dry rot and a leaky gas bag. But after all, if balloons were expendable in battle why weren't they expendable in meeting the demands of good etiquette? Besides, the Duke figured that art would make his balloon distinctive. Anyway he urged the girls to proceed. Which they did, with great glee and enthusiasm.

Ladders were supplied and soon a violently red Gerty took form in actual life size on the port side while on the starboard a familiar elephant was about to crush to extinction the German bug which cried "*Kamerad.*" I dare say the two artists never, in their entire war experience, received a more genuine acclamation than when they finished. They departed at length, their social obligations fulfilled, suffused with artistic pride. The cheers rang in their ears.

The next morning the balloon went up on schedule. An infantry corporal in the first lines gave a startled glance at the apparition and tossed a half full bottle of Mirabel into No Man's Land. Later, it was said, he risked his life to get it back.

The artillery men to the left, among whom were numbered several Blue Ridge mountaineers, dropped to their knees to pray, thinking the flying mammals signified the end of the world.

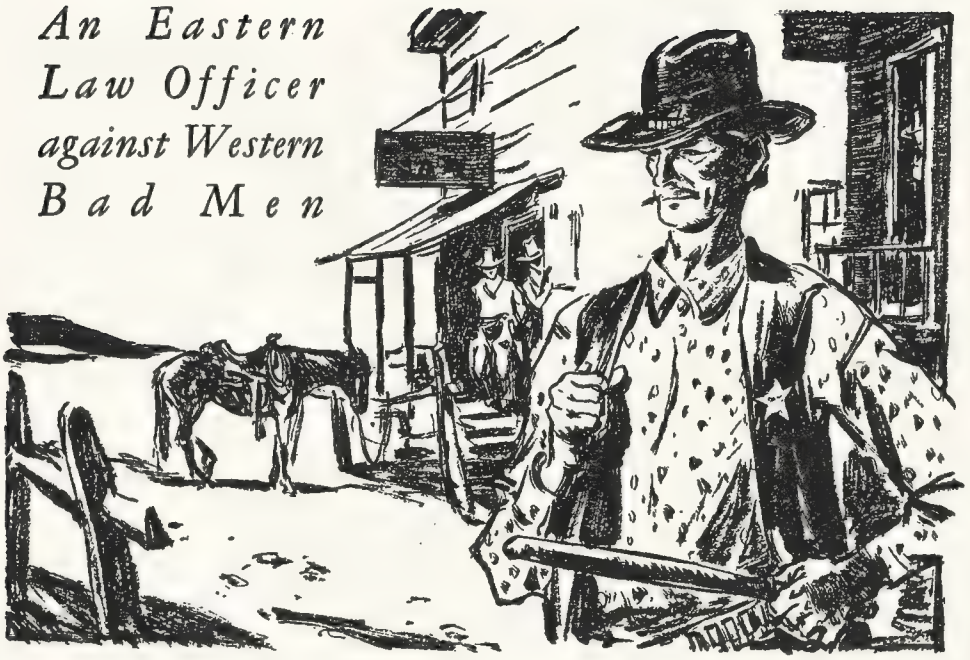
American aviators flew close to inspect the technique. In fact, the balloon was an aerial art gallery with scores of flying critics circling it all morning, to the exasperation of the observers. Art was not only long and broad that morning but altitudinous as well. The exhibition created a sensation all along the Front. And eventually, which was very quickly, the noise reached the ears of Major Jack Jouett, commanding the balloon group.

He broke some speed records in getting to the scene. He immediately demanded an explanation. He was very severe for the good egg that he was, but he knew that he would be called on for explanations by those higher up. He instructed the Duke to explain by endorsement how it happened, then departed. And somehow the impression prevailed that the Sixth Balloon Company was due for a change of commanding officers.

While the Duke pondered, the enemy came to his rescue. An *avion* Boche dived down in the sun's rays, spitting twin streams of incendiary bullets at the offensive caricatures. One stream took Gerty abaft the knuckles. The observers jumped, and anti-aircraft barked and roared to no purpose. A tiny flame danced under Gerty's belly, went spreading over her whole carcass. The meteor crashed downward and the two descending observers with tears of sorrow in their eyes saw two masterpieces by famous American girl artists fall from high estate to a literal hell of a finish—complete incineration.

Most balloon commanders swore loudly and expertly when the Boche got their gas bags. But young Duke Ovitt was grateful and he blessed the unknown enemy who had practically saved him his command.

An Eastern Law Officer against Western Bad Men



A MATTER of AMBITION

By R'AYMOND S. SPEARS

CHIEF COREY GARLAND of the Tyre police on the bank of the Iroquois River in the Adirondacks drew the line close, minding his own business. He circled around town, keeping the peace, but when he watched the workmen going to and from the factories and mills, he didn't know who all of them were—and he had his suspicions about some of them.

One lame man especially caught his eye. In his day that worker had been tall and slim—good—but now he dragged his foot, shuffling along. Perhaps he had come honestly by that game leg. The chief didn't know. Also, he didn't investigate. At the same time, whenever he saw the man going by, his eyes watched covertly. The chief always had wanted to go West—and this man was soft spoken, desert-bred; one of the real fellows, he was sure.

The man's name was George Dunbar on the pay roll, at the boarding house and around town. The chief could see more than a limp in that gait. The good leg was lifted along in a sweeping stride, in pitiful contrast with the bent and broken one. Working along the drums over which the wide paper sheet crackled into rolls by the mile, Dunbar reached and swung, and the chief saw him leap with his hands—a horseman by that gesture. Just wondering, not really thinking or suspecting much, the policeman watched, and a hundred times he caught the workman's furtive, blue eyed glance just withdrawing—wondering, dubious, filled with strange emotions.

Naturally, Chief Garland couldn't help noticing. He took pains to greet the man in passing. Now and again he drifted to the big paper mill, passing the time on a frosty night. Then Dunbar came dragging his game foot to headquarters, walking into where the chief had his feet on the desk and a good smoke between his teeth.

"No use, Chief," he choked. "I'm Medicine Bow Charlie, sure 'nough!"

"What?" Garland sprang to his feet, amazed. "Not the—"

The lame man stared, licked his lips, then burst into a harsh laugh.

"I sure done myself a good one then, Chief!" he jeered at his own betrayal.

"But Medicine Bow is dead," the chief remarked, puzzled.

"It was Jumping Mike they got." The visitor shook his head. "In the hurry of our getaway at the Thermopylæ Hotel we got our clothes mixed. He even got my belt and gun. They shot his face away with .45-90's an' only got me a good one in the hip. I'd been all right if I could have had surgical help, but riding with my bones broke left me thisaway. Course, my road days were done. That's why I came to the mills to work."

"Then it's so. The good ones who get away and quit come East into these places?" Chief Garland inquired.

"I don't think I'd better talk, Chief." The man suddenly shook his head. "I'm done for— Oh, well! Luck played me a dirty trick—that and losing my nerve. I can cook, probably, working in the highway gang."

"You're on the level, aren't you?"

"It's five years now."

"Have a smoke, Dunbar!"

"Wha — what — Chief? My Lord — don't plague me! You don't mean—"

"If you're a crook I wouldn't believe you under oath," the chief replied, his pleasant eyes belying the harshness of his comment. "I mean you're a good one, old man. I'd rather have you for a neighbor than have a reward on my conscience, the way things are. I'm—well, just a backwoodsman, you see. I'm coming forty. All my life I've dreamed of meeting good ones—out there in the Rockies and down the line from Montana to the Border. You don't have to talk. It's none of my business. Yet, I'd sure take it kindly if you'd regard me as a kid, anxious to hear fairy tales."

"Chief, I couldn't. Not tonight. You give me a start. For months I've been growing desperate. By spells I was for running, and then I've looked down into the black water ready to suck me in. Not tonight, Chief, with your leave. But, presently—later on."

Good to his word, Medicine Bow Charlie Prange returned, shedding his alias at the door of Chief Garland, sometimes at headquarters, sometimes on a pleasant day on a rock overlooking the river, and again on a stormy night in the chief's house before the big, birch filled fireplace.

Beginning as a boy in the Medicine Bow range on a ranch where the Wild Bunch stopped in their halcyon days, Prange told the stories he knew. He told the chief about his own life. He told him about Butch Cassidy, Sundance Kid—how Charlie Siringo rode down through, chasing the best of them. And Prange told him how a girl's laugh, the ridicule of a pretty woman, first brought his short gun leaping from its holster, blazing at a man. Then the long days, the weeks, the months of flight.

At first, hiding out as an honest working cowboy, a sheriff jumped and ran him; then a detective after a $500 reward; then a good job down in Salt Lake City, and the chance recognition by a brand reader. Another dash and flight.

Chief Garland heard of a life full of wild adventure, unimaginable difficulties: hunger in high mountains, thirst in vast deserts, the despair that drove a fugitive for a self-defense killing to become a cattle rustler. And, finally, the ride into town on horses, the stickup of a bank, the mad race to safety—spending $13,600 in New Orleans, Atlantic City and New York. The other robberies, other flights, twistings and dodgings and at last in what seemed a sure, easy job the fall in

death of one's tried companions. Wounds, misery, the craving of a hunted beast for shelter—a kindly outfit of cowboys who for old time's sake covered up a sore wounded man from the dicks. At last, a job in a paper mill.

"I reckon the old times are all gone. No excitement left." The chief sighed.

"They're quiet, uh-huh—" Dunbar admitted, adding with conviction, "But they ain't so danged quiet, at that. You take it, now—um-m—"

Dunbar hesitated. A question of ethics afflicted him. He had told a chief of police a lot of things, mentioning names and places. He knew the longing of the chief's heart. He could sympathize with a man who had all his life cherished an opportunity to try himself against good ones.

"I know a man," Dunbar said cautiously. "He's out West there. If you'd write to him—just what I say—he'd likely be able to get you a job out there. I think he would. He was always good to me. Understand, he was a long rider. At the same time he minded his own business, and he was friendly. Write and ask him if there's any chance for a man with experience getting a job as town marshal out thataway. Just kinda add down at the bottom a friend of yours who has half of a split V-nickel without the word 'cents' said probably he would know."

Two weeks later the two met in headquarters to discuss the answer. And two days after that Chief Garland, with six months' leave of absence for his health, took his departure via the M&M Buffalo-Chicago boats and then, after days of travel, arrived at a strange town of shacks and stone buildings. He saw long cattle chutes on the railroad siding, and cowboys wearing chaps. The yellow smoke of a smelter rose over a red, muddy river.

CHIEF GARLAND went straight to the big bank on the busy corner. Over the entrance was a sign, Bull's-Eye Brand, and the emblem as it had been blistered into the hides of a hundred thousand head of beef. In the president's office Garland found himself confronting a stocky, rotund, smiling, flat faced man with bushy eyebrows, who was smooth shaven and wore a watch chain of nuggets that would weigh half a pound. His left thumb was gone; it had been caught in a lariat's half hitch, and Charlie of the Medicine Bow had dressed the wound, daubing it with mountain balsam tree blister gum.

"I'll do anything for a friend of Charlie's," Hank Gambrel said. "He kept me going straight one time—when I came to the forks of the trail. Would you mind telling me how he's situated?"

The chief told the story simply, mentioning how sorry he was he'd worried the paper mill worker—not knowing it. Gambrel nodded. He knew precisely how the chief felt. And that night the Adirondack city police chief was appointed city marshal of Redwater. The uniform was a wide brimmed gray hat, a gray shirt, a dull silver star, a cartridge belt and Cheyenne embossed holster, a .45 short gun, laced tan boots and a pair of handcuffs.

Mine camp, cow town, supply emporium of a land twice as large as all Northern New York, the population of the region was hardly more than any one of a dozen cities with which Chief Garland was personally familiar. Redwater itself had a few more than fifteen hundred people. And it had the name of being a hard town.

Mayor Gambrel added to Garland's information some local particulars regarding personalities and conditions. He was to look out for a freckle faced little fellow with a white scar running from the left side of his mouth. He need not worry about a big, black hatted man whose face was dark and his smile a flash of shining white teeth—a bully easy to subdue. Cowboys could be given a pretty wide latitude, but the local roughs, hanging around the Bull Pen pool room, had to be kept down. They had better be rushed and trimmed the moment they started anything.

No one knew where Garland was from. Hank Gambrel had nominated him for city marshal; that settled it. So Garland strolled about on his beat, ransacking the city, getting the location of the alleys, the run of the streets, the names, places and points of interest. He covertly studied faces. When gamblers, slickers and rounders came up, he shook hands and measured each one by the warmth, chill, or grasp, of the fingers and palms. He looked every one in the eyes.

From Tuesday to Saturday night nothing happened. Then the Bull Pen began to echo. There was a mock fight. A crowd opened to sing there. There began the uproar of clogging, jigging feet, screaming music and roaring guffaws of laughter. Garland saw the Green Light Way begin to thin out, the frequenters of that evergreen street getting away or under cover. He circled around to the alley in the rear of the disorderly pool room. He slipped from shadow to shadow and discovered lookouts at the two rear entrances; he climbed into the consultation room window and, with a good grip on the nightstick he had brought all the way from the Adirondacks—against the advice of Medicine Bow Charlie—he surveyed through a crack the scene of disturbance. He heard two men leaning against the wall talking, one saying—

"They'll sure wallop the tar out of that Eastern cop!"

Garland slid forth. He had handled gangs of river drivers, loggers drunk and full of music and energy, and he knew exactly what to do. He strode into the rear of the crowd and swung his nightstick. One man pulled a gun; his wrist was broken. Another tried a knife; his skull was cracked. And when City Marshal Garland at last stood back against the wall, the proprietor of the joint, a little man with a freckled face and a scar on the cheek, crawled across the floor on his knees and pleaded for mercy.

The surgeon worked eight hours repairing the damage the new city marshal had done. The peace officer went into each and every amusement place that night. Hats came off, smiles spread wide, and he was offered anything, everything, and as much as he cared to take. He took something soft, or a smoke; and, just to show how good a fellow he was, he pulled down to fast music a real old backwoods Adirondack clog. When Tipeye Riley in a consultation office definitely asked, "How much?" Garland replied:

"I'm on the level, Riley; go straight according to popular opinion here and I shan't say a word. You know the administration. You tell Mayor Gambrel I wish he'd tell you how far to go. Don't go any farther than he says, any of you."

"Yes, sir, Mr. Garland." Tipeye nodded. "Gambrel's square himself."

A few days later Gambrel invited City Marshal Garland to dinner at the Commercial Club. Ranchers, storekeepers, bankers, mine owners—they shook hands with Garland seriously. He felt *good*, knowing he had done what was right. Weeks went by with hardly anything to do. Boys would rumpus around, now and then a drunk would be boisterous, but nothing happened. Redwater had killed or run out several city marshals—gunmen, too. That locust stick of Garland's bothered them, though.

Somehow the idea got around that the city marshal couldn't shoot, despite his big revolver. He was, they said, just one of those Down East clubbers. Perhaps this encouraged the Wallin boys and two of the Blue Mountain gang to come to town on the morning of the mines and smelter payday. They rushed the Bull's-Eye Brand Bank, gathered into hand thirty-five thousand dollars and then broke back to their horses.

Usually City Marshal Garland came to duty late in the afternoon, but luck was with him. As this was payday, he came out early and gossiped around, his eyes presently seeing plenty. When he saw the riders skip into the bank, his curiosity was aroused. When they emerged, their guns and canvas bags in hand, he knew what was happening.

Old times, indeed! This was what he

had taken leave of absence hoping to see! Pulling his .45 for business, he surged into the fray, shooting. One bullet struck the bandit leader's horse, and the air was alive with bullets, whoops, smoke and thudding shots.

The leader swapped bullets and fell dead. Another man was lifted out of his saddle by an upward shot. Citizens, recognizing the sound of a holdup, ran out into the street, and a short, thick-set gunmaker with eye glasses and special sights on a .32 special tried his workmanship with methodical and deadly precision.

Bags of currency, two or three revolvers, two wide brimmed hats and several red handkerchiefs fell with three outlaws into the street, and down across the river ford raced two men, frightened, panic-stricken, splashing the water twenty feet high.

They found City Marshal Garland in smiling anguish, his longing for a real gun fight satisfied and his hand smashed by a bullet. The surgeons were sorry—he would always have a crippled hand. He tried to feel sorry, too, but he just couldn't. His six months' leave of absence from Tyre was not up yet, and Redwater took up a collection to send him back to that pleasant haven. They would have been fairly glad to have him stay on as city marshal, but he preferred to go back where he figured he belonged now, all things considered.

Tyre had read in the local weekly, which had copied all the accounts of City Marshal Garland's fight with bandits, all about that stand to shoot it out with the bank raiders. The townsmen were proud of their native son. The town turned out with the local band and the village administration, welcoming their chief on his return from his vacation. They saw him skip down the car steps and over the station platform, smiling, his hand in a bandage. No one could look sorry enough for him. That brave, pathetic smile of his, it was all right; but of course, he would never be the same again. He shook hands all around.

The reception, the big dinner, all the furbelows went through according to the program, and the Watertown paper printed three columns about it. But when the chief was left to himself, as soon as he could make his getaway, he headed off down to the great drying room where the paper snapped and crackled along the steam rolls and where another veteran of the Wild West was busy. Waiting while Dunbar helped change a roll, the chief presently saw Medicine Bow Charlie stand back, shuffling and limping, giving a trained and practical glance from feed to finish, seeing that all was well.

Then the chief came alone, grinning. The one-time outlaw watched him critically, squinting. He presently started to meet his friend, dragging his foot.

"You dad blanked old fool!" Medicine Bow Charlie grunted.

"Fool yourse'f!" The chief chuckled.

Then they whooped low with laughter, shaking hands.

"If I'd been there," the outlaw said, "You'd had a monument in Boot Hill!"

"Listen, boy," the chief assured him, "you'd have had two game legs!"

Tavern of the Seas

By LAWRENCE G GREEN

PLUNGING eastward to India in their crazy three deckers, the old Portuguese navigators used to call at a place which they named the "tavern of the seas."

Today Table Bay is still the halfway house on many a long sea road. Here the traveler sees the first of South Africa's great sights—the weatherbeaten face and grand escarpments of Table Mountain against the sky.

Under the shadow of that old mountain, in Table Bay Docks, many nations—represented by their ships and seamen—pass in review.

Hulking timber ships from the Baltic ports, piled bridge high, listing fearfully. Lean black freighters from New York. Drab cargo boats wallowing into dock with rails under their hatches and the fresh southeaster blowing spume across their rusty decks.

German liners with striped, stumpy funnels and enormous upperworks; with rows of large portholes, with buglers who play hymn tunes before breakfast. Large, comfortable ships from Rotterdam—cargo ships with plenty of room for passengers under their mahogany bridges.

Ships whose black funnels bear the two red rings of the Clan Line; smart ships, with scraggy, dungaree clad lascars swarming about the decks to the urge of the *serang's* whistle.

Long Maru boats from Yokohama, always with heavy awnings above their teeming deck passengers; always with lines of monstrously similar yellow faces seen over the high bulwarks; always bringing fantastic visions of the Orient, growing from vague imaginings into clear cut, yet infinitely bizarre reality as the whine and twang and throb of Eastern music drifts across the sunset tinted waters of Table Bay Docks.

Brightly painted Australian passenger steamers with empty promenade decks and well filled, cheering, handkerchief-waving steerages. Sea weary trawlers, slipping into the inner basin with their tired crews wearing collars and ties, ready to go ashore after two weeks of toil and hardship on the fishing banks.

Battered little whalers, coming in from their stations along the coast for repairs; or putting to sea bravely, with much fresh paint, on stupendous Antarctic adventures. Coasters from Mombasa and the East African ports with the weeds of the tropics on their hulls. Gaunt Scandinavian motor ships with huge derricks and small masts. Incredibly ugly wartime ships, the Red Ensign over their triangular sterns.

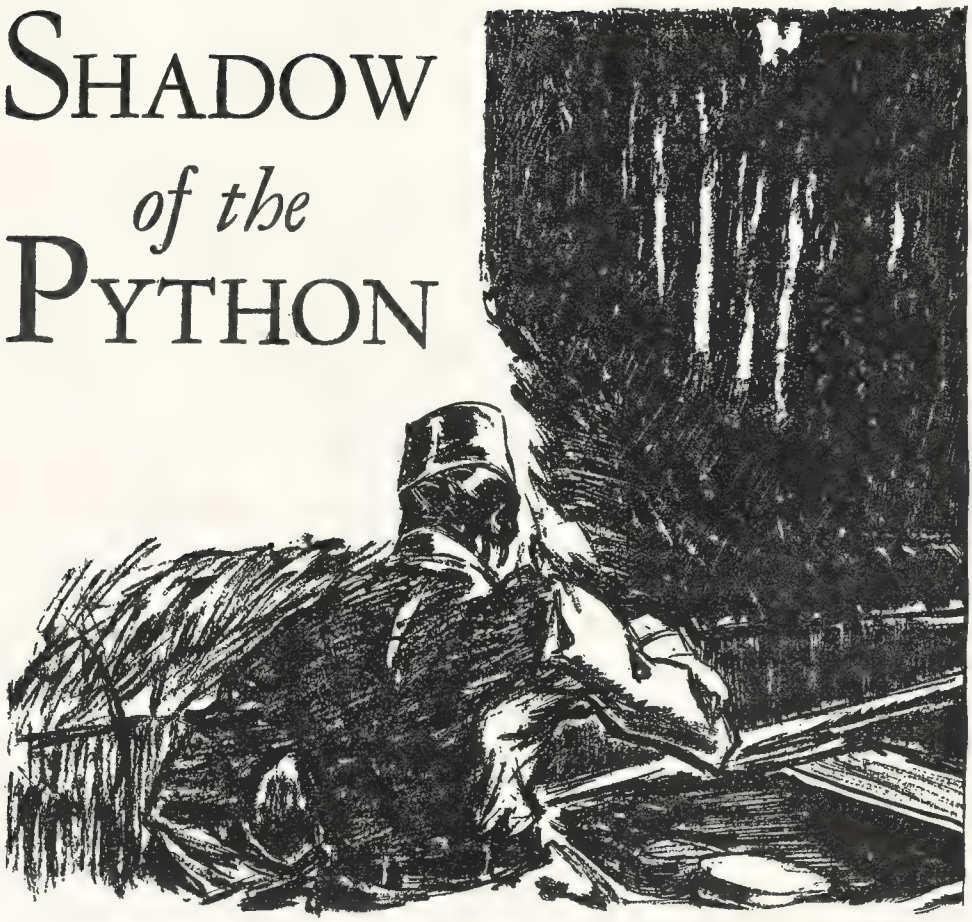
And occasionally, even now, a square rigged ship. For months sometimes it seems that the last of the old time windjammers has called at the tavern of the seas; that the last glorious clipper has made her number off the Cape of Storms and passed with her hard driven sisters into the mists of memory.

Then from the heights of Signal Hill a white dot on the ocean's rim is seen; a dot that takes beautiful shape and comes racing out of the blue after months at sea. A tug meets her beyond Robben Island and the stately ship nears the land at last with her sailormen lying out along the yard arms, grappling with the canvas, giving her a harbor stow.

The world will not see her like again; the ports of the world, the tavern of the seas, will be the poorer for her passing.

Concluding a Story

SHADOW *of the* PYTHON



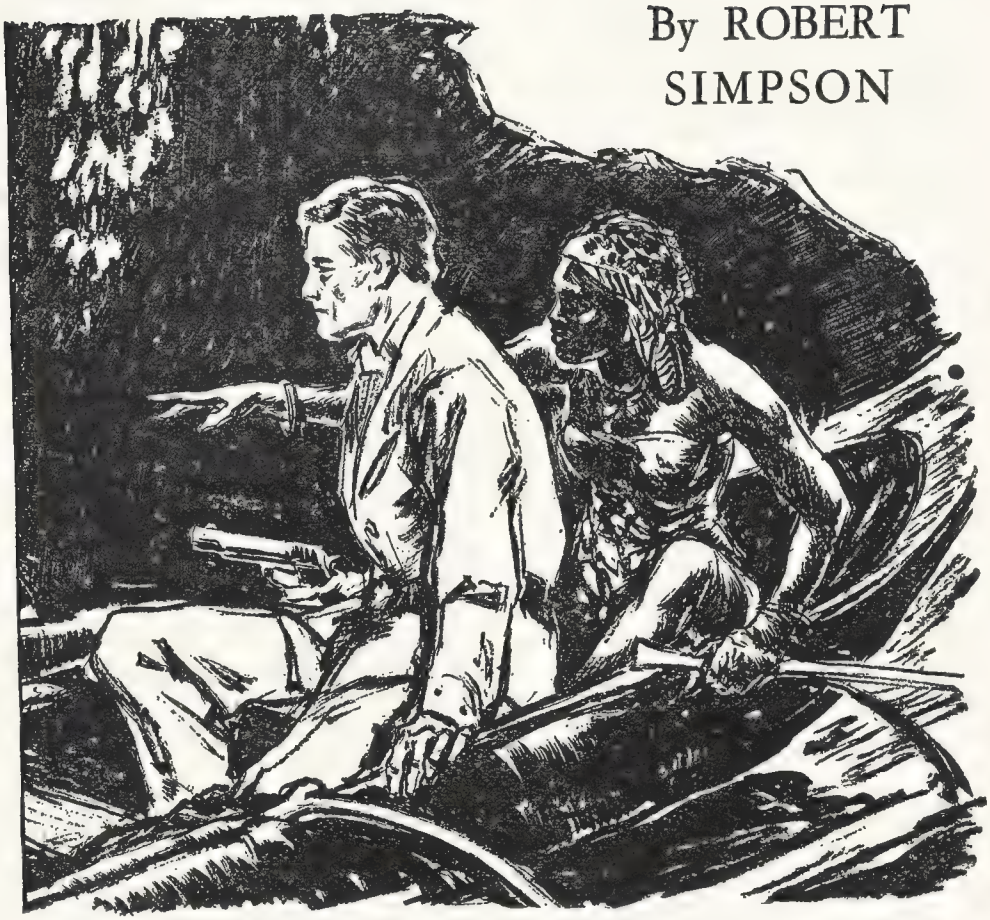
MARK TANNER, the trader, persuaded Crosby, district commissioner at Segwanga, to leave his Yoruba soldiermen behind when he went to treacherous old Chief Walla to try to induce him to permit government road building through his territory.

But the "peaceful palaver" had taken the form of a withering blast of slugs and nails and pot legs from antiquated muzzle loaders in the hands of old Walla's men. Tanner went down under the first fusillade, as had Ketterell, the government engineer. Crosby, unhurt, bore Ketterell out of the maelstrom.

Brinsley, the fourth of the party of whites that had gone to old Walla under the white flag, went to pieces when he and Crosby—Crosby staggering along with the delirious Ketterell—gained the shelter of a hut sacred to the python cult. Brinsley, who hated Crosby anyway because of his strength, then began to whine the chorus Crosby knew all official Seg-

of the Slave Coast

By ROBERT SIMPSON



wanga would echo when he brought back what was left of his commission.

"You don't think I know why you brought Ketterell out instead of Tanner, Crosby, do you?" Brinsley sneered. "You didn't think I knew how you feel about Diana, Tanner's wife, did you? Well, I know you led Tanner in there to be shot down because you—"

But Crosby's look cut short the whine.

Who in Segwanga, where his sympathy for Diana was well known, Crosby reflected bitterly, would believe him if he explained that Tanner had been responsible for the disaster? And only Diana would know why he had chosen to bring Ketterell back instead of her husband. Crosby thought he knew how Diana Tanner felt about young Dick Ketterell . . .

The soldiers did not come at the end of twenty-four hours; but Loko, engineer of Crosby's launch, did. He staggered into the hut.

"Launch—live foh—creekside," he said thickly. "We go dere—one time."

Loko was bleeding from a dozen wounds; and no sooner had they regained the launch than he collapsed.

A handsome native girl materialized mysteriously out of nowhere at Crosby's side as he steered the little boat through the creek mazes.

"I be Nanda, sah," she said simply. "If you go foh Segwanga, you go wrong way. Here, let me take!"

By this time Crosby's mind refused further to question the wherefores of things; he gave over the wheel, knowing that once Segwanga was regained and he had got Ketterell back to Diana—had talked to Diana himself—he was coming back to Walla's blood crazed town and bring out what was left of Mark Tanner . . .

Crosby had got some of the dirt and blood off him the next morning in Segwanga, when he heard Diana Tanner's quick, light step outside his office.

"No tears," he prayed silently. "Dear God, no tears! . . ."

And then Diana Tanner came in, alone.

CHAPTER VIII

DIANA TANNER

IN COOL riding clothes, with her sun helmet and riding crop tucked under her left arm, Diana came a few quick steps into Crosby's living room, smoothing her red-brown hair with a deft right hand that was not given to squandering energy in gestures of any sort.

Lithe and straight and slender as any Jakri Venus in the Benin country, she wore riding breeches with the nonchalant ease of a captain of cavalry, yet never for a moment lost any of the strictly feminine appeal that was in the black-violet of her eyes and in the altogether too inviting softness of her mouth.

Even Mrs. Markly conceded that Diana Tanner was a beautiful woman; being careful, however, to add, so that no one would misunderstand her—

"But dangerously so, my dear, dangerously so."

Just then Diana did not feel particularly beautiful, and not at all dangerous. Though she was trying very hard to appear perfectly calm and to accept the situation in its many phases with all the serenity she could muster, she knew she was frightened white inside, and that the ten minutes of time Denby had conceded to her would be either much too short or much too long.

She knew from what Brinsley had said to Mrs. Markly—and everybody else—before Denby had been able to shut him up, that something quite terrible had happened. Just how terrible she was not yet sure.

The expedition shot to little bits; Tanner hit and left behind; Brant left at Goba; Ketterell dragged out; Crosby's heroic gesture to save his face; drunken launch engineer . . .

Brinsley's chatter had sounded like a jumble of headlines, and whatever they really meant, she wanted now to know all about it. She wanted to be told the whole truth so that she could look the thing in the face.

Yes, she was tired of all that; sick of it; sick of the Dark Continent effect that, as it had seemed to her ever since she had come to Segwanga with Mark Tanner, everybody appeared to want so badly to maintain—even about what they had for dinner! And there was no need for it. She was quite sure it was just a pose, geographical perhaps, but a pose for all that. And even if the nights *were* black—black and as monosyllabic as Tanner and that vile old devil Walla, himself, it wasn't always necessary to—

"Jim!"

"Where's Denby?" Crosby came from the bedroom looking about him in blank astonishment. "What—"

"I asked for a few minutes and he gave me ten. Are you—are you all right?"

He took her hand, held it a brief, nervous moment, then stepped quickly away to pick up the tin of cigarets from the little wicker table. Diana followed him

just as quickly, put her sun helmet and riding crop on the table and gripped his arm.

"What is it? I want the truth, Jim. All of it. What happened?"

Crosby fumbled with the lid of the cigaret tin, twirling it round and round. He had never really become accustomed to her calling him Jim; still less so when Tanner was not around, even though Tanner himself had been responsible for the friendly informality. And just then, somehow, it made things a bit more difficult.

"You know, of course," he said in a low, almost grumbling basso, "that Mark—isn't with us?"

"Yes,"—quickly. "There was trouble. Brinsley was saying everything went wrong. You left Brant at Goba and—and everybody was shot to little bits. He said Mark was hit, but that you managed to drag Dick Ketterell out and—"

"That's all," Crosby concluded dully. "The whole story. Ketterell is in hospital with a fever, but he'll be all right. Quite all right very soon." He held out the open tin of cigarets to her in a mechanical fashion. "Or something to drink, perhaps?"

"Jim! What's wrong! Look at me! Why do you avoid looking at me? Aren't you going to tell me the truth either? Isn't anybody going—"

"Sh! Please." He gripped her hands gently. "You're allowing the situation—your nerves—the chatter on the beach—please!" He tried to lead her to a chair. "You have the whole story. All of it. We managed to pull Ketterell through and—"

"You mean *you* did!"

"Well, I—I was nearest and—and he'll be all right. Quite. A bit delirious, but, in a few days . . ." And Crosby smiled just as if he thought Diana Tanner's time to smile had really arrived.

Diana did not smile. The rather wild look in her eyes did not quieten in the least. That Ketterell had been brought back; that he was in hospital; that he would be all right soon—none of these hopefully asserted statements brought the slightest change in her expression. She was still puzzled and anxious and hungry for information.

OF COURSE, Crosby was not thinking about the ten minutes Denby had given her, or of the fact that he had as yet told her nothing that Brinsley's headlines had not told.

"But—but Jim! Walla was a friend of Mark's. Why should he shoot him, or any one at all, if you left the soldiers at Goba? Was it—was it your idea to leave them there? Or Mark's?"

"Mine,"—shortly.

"Yours! I don't believe it! And you are not looking at me. You're looking everywhere—oh, never mind the cigarets or the drinks. You don't want them. You're just— Jim, tell me! Are you sure Mark was hit? Are you quite sure?"

Crosby nodded slowly.

"There was treachery somewhere. Mark's expression, when he was hit, said so." He looked down at his boots, then toward the open window as if he were listening for the verdict of the voices on the beach below—now a little more subdued but lifting every little while to the level of a real demonstration. "And I heard him say something about being tricked."

"Tricked—by whom?"

"I don't know. I've tried to think the thing out, but there doesn't seem to be any explanation. And I'm really terribly sorry about Mark. Terribly sorry. If there had been anything I could have done . . ."

"I know. I'm sure of that. I'm quite sure of that."

"You are?" He faced her suddenly. "You mean you really believe—"

"Of course." Her fingers rested lightly on his arm and she looked steadily up at him. "You don't suppose I'd ever think you capable of a dishonorable thing."

"Thanks." Crosby turned sharply away to avoid her eyes. "I'd hoped you'd say that."

"Did you doubt it?"

"No. I knew you'd understand that it was not a question of choice but of circumstance."

"Choice? What do you mean by that, Jim?"

Crosby's expression now was rather desperate. He did not want soft looks of gratitude, and he searched for words that would avoid anything bordering on sentimental appreciation of his efforts on Ketterell's behalf.

"I—er—I mean that I helped Ketterell because I was able to help him," he managed at last, and began to pour whisky into a glass. "Nothing more than that. You did not enter into it at all. You understand? Not in the slightest."

Diana looked more puzzled than ever.

"Why should I? Why should your rescue of Ketterell mean anything to me?" Crosby looked up sharply and saw her coming round the table toward him. "There's something bothering you, Jim. What is it?"

"Nothing." He put down the whisky bottle. "Nothing at all. I just want to make things clear."

Diana paused.

"And you think it necessary to make it clear to me that you saved Ketterell's life just because you wanted to and without giving my possible interest in the matter a thought?"

Crosby gave his attention to a bottle of soda water.

"Quite so. Exactly. I—er—I'm sorry he isn't in shape for visitors, but he'll be all right. He has the constitution of an ox and—well, you need have no fears . . ."

"I haven't any—not where Dick Ketterell is concerned. Before he leaves the hospital, he'll surely have at least one of the nurses believing she is the only woman he ever loved."

Crosby gaped and put the soda water bottle back on the tray.

"You mean, you—"

"Then he'll go home on sick leave and convince several lonely lady passengers on the mail boat of the same thing; and they probably won't wake up to the awful truth until they discover that he's left the ship at Plymouth in the small hours of the morning." Diana smiled through the strained and anxious look that haunted the deeps of her eyes. "That Plymouth stop, Jim, has helped many a man, who has been lucky in love or unlucky at cards, to avoid the payment of his just debts."

Crosby did not smile. He stared, and as he stared, Diana came slowly toward him.

"You don't want him!" Crosby's voice was a husky whisper. Stark incredulity was in every line of his face. "You mean Ketterell is—is—he means nothing to you?"

Diana paused and there were several seconds of silence into which even the voices on the beach below did not intrude. Then, Diana was saying very simply:

"I hope, some day, I can laugh at this. I'd laugh now if this were the time to laugh. But I've only ten minutes and—and I can't laugh anyway. It's too—too — Please, Jim, don't look at me like that! Dick Ketterell is nothing to me. Nothing at all. If I ever told him why you saved his life—"

"I didn't!"

"You're lying, Jim. And you're not a good liar. You brought him back because you thought I wanted him."

"Good God! Do you know what this means? Do you know what Brinsley said—and Lathrop—and what all of them will say if—"

"I know. And we mustn't give them any reason to say anything of the sort. No reason at all."

"No! No, of course not!"

"Besides, I can't really believe that even Walla would shoot Mark treacherously in cold blood." She came suddenly nearer and once more her fingers rested lightly on his arm. "You are quite sure that Mark was hit? Really quite sure? You were near enough to—to see?"

"What do you mean?" Crosby was staring again. "Do you realize what you are saying? What do you know about this?"

"Nothing, Jim. I'm just thinking. You see, I know Mark Tanner very well, and I know that old Walla, vile as he is, is a friend of Mark's. And Mark doesn't make any mistakes about the company he keeps—black or white. He always knows what to expect and he always goes prepared for any emergency. He's lived out here a long, long time, and when he advised you to leave the Yoruba soldiers behind at Goba—"

"I told you I—"

"Yes. You told me, Jim. But my knowledge of Mark Tanner told me that if he'd wanted those soldiers brought along, they'd have been with you—or *he* wouldn't. And when he advised you to leave them behind he knew exactly what he was doing. Exactly. He had it all arranged in advance. Everything. And if anything really happened to him—you are sure he was hit, Jim? You are quite sure?"

Crosby was sure of nothing now; not even of the haunting look that had been on Tanner's face when he went down. But he knew what he had to do. There was no question about that. None whatever. Because if Ketterell meant nothing to Diana—if Brinsley and Lathrop and the rest were going to say he had made no effort to bring Tanner back because he wanted Diana for himself, there was just one thing he must do. Even if it couldn't be done.

"Jim! Why are you looking like that? What are you going to do?"

A heavy step sounded in the hall, a step that was purposely heavy and slow.

"Jim—tell me! What are you going to do?"

"Nothing. Nothing, I'm afraid, that will matter very much." Crosby turned to face the door. "That you, Denby? Come in."

DENBY strolled in with a handful of official looking documents that had no immediate importance except that they served as an excuse for the police commissioner's visit to his own rooms.

"Sorry I'm a bit overdue," he drawled, holding up the documents, "but I had to find these." He glanced briefly in Diana's direction, caught the strained and anxious look in her eyes but saw that there were no tears and thanked his stars for that much. "Anything in particular you wanted to see me about, Crosby?"

Crosby hesitated, glanced at Diana who was picking up her sun helmet from the table, then looked directly at the police commissioner.

"Yes. I'd like you to find out for me at once everything you can about a certain daughter of Lori Egba's. She said her name was Nanda."

Denby's long lantern jaw seemed to drop several inches, and his eyes shifted sharply in Diana's direction as if he expected some definite reaction there. Diana, however, was putting on her sun helmet and was tucking her hair into place without even a hint of the fact that she had heard the name of Nanda.

"Why—er—of course," Denby managed to articulate. "The girl isn't unknown to me. I'll have a report for you this afternoon."

"And the girl herself? Think you could manage to have her accompany the report?"

"You—want to see her?"

"I do. In my office this afternoon if you can manage it."

"Surely. If she's in Segwanga."

"I know she is. Saw her this morning—on the wharf."

Again Denby glanced sharply toward Diana, who had taken up her riding crop and was idly tapping the edge of the table with it and keeping her eyes fixed on her boots. Suddenly she looked up.

"Perhaps I'd better go. You gentlemen must have private business to discuss."

"No," Crosby said simply. "That was all I wanted to see Denby about at the moment and, of course—" he smiled—"you must go as you came. Under the protection of the police."

"Then if the police can wait for the drink I'm afraid it wants," Diana said

quickly, "I'd like to go now, please." She held out her hand suddenly to Crosby.

"Goodby. You have been very kind, and I hope—I hope—well, nothing is ever as bad as it seems, is it?" A smile broke through the dull pain in her eyes. "Goodby."

"Goodby," Crosby echoed dully, and all the life in him seemed to ooze out of his finger tips as she drew her hand away.

"Ready, Mr. Denby?"

"At your service. See you later, Crosby."

A blurred flash of white preceded Denby's lanky figure through the doorway into the hall, and presently the light tap of riding boots descending the stairs was followed in a little while by the sharp clatter of hoof beats on concrete; hoof beats that trailed off into a silence of their own, leaving Crosby alone with a single thought that overruled all else, both then and later.

Even when the tingling, encouraging warmth of Diana's fingers had been subdued by routine duties that were more numerous, hurried and emphatic than usual, this thought remained.

The report to Bradbury, the provincial commissioner at Warri; official orders scattered in all directions; monotoned conferences with native political agents; somber moments with relatives of house boys and carriers "reported missing"; another short, sharp and unprofitable session with Lathrop who had dispatched the *Magpie* in search of Brant and the *Vixen;* all of this increased rather than diminished the importance of the thought in Crosby's mind.

And then, in the later afternoon, when the heat of the sun had gone and the excitement of the morning had toned down to a low hum of suspended expectation, Denby appeared in Crosby's office doorway.

"Are you sure that girl was on the beach this morning?" he asked at once, striding to a chair beside Crosby's desk.

"Quite. I told you I saw her on the wharf."

"Hunh." Denby stroked his long jaw in a bothered kind of way. "My fellows have looked for her everywhere and can't seem to find any trace of her."

"No? Perhaps Lathrop could give you some information."

"Lathrop!"

Crosby nodded.

"He spoke to her for a moment or two on the wharf this morning."

"Lathrop!" Denby repeated blankly. "Are you sure about that?"

"Quite. What's the mystery, Denby? Who is this girl? Or rather, what is she? Why do you think it so remarkable that Lathrop should speak to her?"

Denby paused, dabbed at his forehead and upper lip with his handkerchief and glanced out through the open doorway at a knot of native hangers-on, who seemed to live exclusively upon the hope that somebody or other would get into trouble and give them something to chatter about.

"Well, she is a daughter of Lori Egba's," Denby began. "You know that much."

"Yes."

"And she used to belong to Tanner."

"Tanner!"

"Before Mrs. Tanner came out here," Denby continued dryly. "When that happened, Tanner got rid of her by selling her to Walla."

"Selling her!"

"More or less. She was part of a trade in oil, and I'm afraid she didn't like it."

Crosby's brows came sharply together in a puzzled, unbelieving frown.

"But what right had Tanner to include her in such a trade. He couldn't do it legally under any circumstances, and I'm sure Lori Egba never sanctioned—"

"No. Lori Egba did not enter into the transaction at all. Nanda was a free agent where her father's rights were concerned, but Tanner knew too much about her and she found it advisable to become part of a trade in oil." Denby smiled. "In these parts being a queen in Walla's harem is preferable to a lot of other disagreeable things that can happen to a girl with at least one killing to her credit."

Crosby's frown deepened.

"Can you prove any of this, Denby, or is it just native stuff—the chatter of the trading beaches?"

"Not all of it. But I don't think we could prove anything even if she didn't have Tanner and Walla on her side. She's too clever. Too damned clever for Lathrop by all odds. What the deuce do you suppose he's letting himself in for?"

Crosby shook his head and stared hard at the concrete floor of his office, while the memory of the sound of Tanner's voice came back to him with sudden and startling clearness:

"Tricked, by thunder! Done in by a rotten—!"

Had Tanner meant Nanda?

CHAPTER IX

BALAK

AS CROSBY'S thoughts raced back to Walla's town—to the fall of Tanner and the mysterious appearance of Nanda on the *Valiant*, and then leaped forward to her great eagerness to reach Segwanga in the morning, where and when she had an apparent rendezvous with Lathrop—he remembered the captain's obvious nervousness when the girl's name was mentioned, and remembered, too, how very much disturbed Lathrop had become when he, Crosby, had advised recalling Brant and leaving final action to wait upon orders from Bradbury at Warri.

On the surface, at least, Lathrop had been disturbed because Tanner and the houseboys and carriers were being deserted after having been promised protection they did not get.

It was a good moral attitude and, above everything else, it had considerable political advantages, particularly if it could be acted upon exclusively by Lathrop before headquarters at Warri had a chance to step in and, as usual, swallow the lion's share of the glory and promotions and the not unexpected treasure that were some of the perquisites to be derived from a scrap with a chief of Walla's size and importance.

And as Lathrop had not had a chance to get into any kind of worthwhile action on his own hook in quite some time, and cordially hated the administrative department for its authoritative interference with his most lucrative opportunities, there was just a chance that, by working hand in hand with Nanda, he had planned and hoped for a result quite different from that which had actually come to pass.

Of course this was mere hypothesis and Crosby knew it. But that Lathrop and Nanda—ostensibly as remote as the poles in their interests and outlook—might possibly see the situation in Walla's town through the same kind of eyes, was not nearly as remote as it seemed. Not now.

Nanda had an ax to grind. She hated both Walla and Tanner and would unquestionably find Lathrop, with rifles and machine guns at his command, admirably suited to her purpose.

Whether she was the prime mover in the affair and had induced Tanner to take the initiative as far as the expedition to Walla's town was concerned, or, as was more likely, had simply adapted her plans to fit the opportunity of the moment, Crosby, of course, did not know. But he was reasonably sure that this daughter of Lori Egba's, who seemed to have drifted far afield since she had cut herself loose from the ultra-respectable jurisdiction of her renowned father, held all of the strings of the Walla's town situation in her hands.

Undoubtedly, some very urgent necessity had compelled her to seek passage to Segwanga on the *Valiant*, and Crosby was certain now that if Loko, the black engineer, had not collapsed at the wheel, Nanda's presence on board the launch would never have been discovered. She had appeared only when he, Crosby, had demonstrated that his unfamiliarity with the tangled maze of the Delta creeks was likely to lead them into trouble instead of away from it.

Consequently, it seemed to Crosby

that if he could find and follow Nanda . . .

He came sharply to his feet, his eyes suddenly wide with something akin to an inspiration.

"Who is your best special policeman, Denby?"

"Balak," Denby said, studying Crosby's unusual excitement with a kind of academic interest. "Why?"

"Knows his way about, I suppose—land or water?"

"Like a book."

"Fine. The *Magpie* left about noon, didn't she?"

"About. But what has the mail launch to do with Balak or Nanda or—"

"The *Magpie* isn't on the mail run this trip," Crosby said, his eyes narrowing again as his brows came together in a reflective frown. "She's headed for Goba with orders from Lathrop to Brant." He paused. "And I have a notion Nanda is on board."

"On board the *Magpie!* The devil, Crosby!"

"That's what I said the first time I saw her," Crosby said with a wry smile. "But she informed me she was no devil; just a good Jakri girl who had been good a long time. Too long, perhaps. Evidently she's broken loose again."

"But, confound it, Crosby! You're not actually suspecting Lathrop of anything so silly as treason, are you?"

Crosby shook his head.

"No, no. Nothing half so dramatic as that. Just a bit of rather dangerous military politics with a dash of woman stuff thrown in." He moved suddenly toward the door. "I wish you'd send Balak to me—on the wharf. I'd like to engage his services for several days if he's free."

Denby's eyebrows lifted.

"Hunh. What's your notion, if I may ask?"

Crosby paused in the doorway.

"I don't know yet. But I'd like it kept dark—whatever it is—until I return."

Denby's long face became longer with a worried, bothered look.

"But with the *Valiant* out of commission," he persisted. "Markly has nothing in his kit bag fast enough to give the *Magpie* a five or six hour start and catch her in time to do you any good."

Crosby smiled his appreciation of Denby's accurate guesswork.

"You're a good policeman, Denby. But Markly has been having the *Valiant* overhauled to put her in shape to take the *Magpie's* place on the mail run, and though it's going to break his schedule loving heart, I'm afraid I'll have to compel him to use the *Violet* or a canoe for the mail." Crosby laughed. "And I think he'll choose a canoe. See you on the wharf before I go."

Denby grunted something about a wild goose chase as Crosby departed abruptly for the wharf, then stretched his long legs in the direction of the barracks where he would probably find the sphinx-like Sobo, whose name was Balak, squatting in solemn loneliness in the sun as usual, staring profoundly into the dust.

SHORTLY after sundown, the *Valiant* slipped quietly away from the wharf and, heading for the blackness of midstream, turned her nose upriver.

Crosby was in the cabin with Balak; a house boy was already busying himself with the preparation of Crosby's dinner, and the engineer at the wheel of the launch completed the company on board. Preparations for departure had been made so quietly and so unobtrusively that even the voluble Brinsley, who had strolled down to the wharf five minutes before the launch had left, had not had the slightest inkling of what was afoot when Denby had led him away from the wharf's edge on the pretext of going up to the hospital to see how Ketterell was getting along.

Brinsley had not been interested in Ketterell's progress, but he was interested in one of the nurses there on duty. So was Denby. And when they had passed up the wharf together, Crosby, coming down on the opposite side of some piled-up bags of cement, had heard Brinsley say quite distinctly:

"Ketterell's all right. He's confoundedly lucky to be alive at all. What about poor Tanner? Left lying there at the mercy of those chalked up swine. It's the story of David and Uriah the Hittite all over again, and . . ."

The voice had trailed off to mingle with the smothering murmur of those other voices that still lingered about the headquarters building to question and to doubt, but it was Brinsley's voice that Crosby was hearing now as the new smooth throb of the *Valiant's* engines promised him more speed than anything that floated in these waters could produce.

And Brinsley's voice, of course, had only begun to talk. In a few days, with some able and more subtle assistance from Mrs. Markly, Captain Lathrop and some others, the things Brinsley said would grow and expand and reach out to Sapeli, to Warri, to the remotest corners of the province; and now Crosby knew that the saving of Ketterell's life would mean nothing at all.

Diana did not want Ketterell; had never wanted him; knew him for what he was and would have laughed—laughed!

Crosby shivered and looked upon Balak, whose lean un-Sobo-like face and unwinking eyes gave not the slightest indication that he ever had a thought.

"You *savez* Nanda?" Crosby asked at last.

Balak nodded.

"I *savez*."

"You *savez* Walla's town?"

Again Balak nodded without a hint of any sort of emotion.

"I *savez* um."

"You fear to go there for this time?"

Balak shrugged his shoulders most expressively.

"Fear be so-so small boy palaver."

"Good. Maybe so we go there. You 'member Tanner?"

"I 'membah him."

"He be your friend?"

"I be friend foh all man," Balak answered carefully.

"You be Walla's friend?"

"Walla be friend foh no man."

"No?" Crosby considered this a minute or two. "You think maybe so he shoot Tanner? Tanner be him friend long time."

Balak shook his head slowly.

"Walla be friend foh no man," he repeated with apparent conviction, as the *Valiant* lurched around a curve and the scattered lights of Segwanga went out behind a curtain of mangroves. "Suppose white man catch plenty gun, Walla be him friend."

"And when white man no catch plenty gun?"

Balak nodded and the ghost of a smile that was as dry as kernel dust hung about the corners of his mouth for a second or two.

"Walla shoot plenty quick." He paused, then added simply, "But he no shoot Tanner this time."

"This time!" Crosby leaned forward. "What do you know about *this* time?"

"All man talk, Balak listen," the special policeman said imperturbably; then added without a trace of humor, "Some 'nother time, maybe so, Walla shoot Tanner—" he snapped his fingers contemptuously—"like that. But not this time. This time be some 'nother man shoot Tanner."

"Some other man?" Crosby repeated, and was too interested in the fact to smile at Balak's way of expressing it. "Or, maybe so, a woman?"

But Balak shook his head and said briefly and all sufficiently—

"Nanda no *savez* gun."

Crosby's eyebrows lifted sharply and, for some reason or other that he did not stop to analyze, he was glad Nanda did not know how to shoot. Though the girl had apparently had pretty rough treatment at the hands of both Tanner and Walla, and though revenge, according to her code, was in order, it was with a decided sense of relief that Crosby looked forward to catching up with her again. Of course, he had no actual assurance that she was aboard the *Magpie*, and even if the *Valiant* did overhaul the slower launch and he learned that she

was an unauthorized passenger, he had no immediate intention of allowing her to know that he was on her trail.

At the proper time and place, he intended to leave the shadowing of Nanda to Balak, while he would go on alone to carry out the plan he had in mind; a plan that had nothing to do with government or the upholding of the law, but a plan that, simply enough, would preserve Crosby's self-respect and, he hoped, bring peace to his immortal soul.

CHAPTER X

NANDA AGAIN

A GLARING morning sun leaped above the mangroves and found the *Valiant* something more than ten miles beyond Goba.

At Goba, where an ambitious Lagos man held forth on a lonely mud and wattle trading beach that gave to the place the other name of Desolation Creek, Crosby had learned that the *Vixen* had gone north two days before. But of how far north, and just what had actually happened to the sternwheeler and to Brant and his Yoruba soldiers, the Lagos man professed a sleepy but emphatic ignorance. And if the *Magpie* had passed through earlier that morning it must have been while he was asleep because he had not seen her.

Crosby was quite sure the Lagos man was lying. Lagos men always knew everything that went on within a radius of fifty miles and always lied about it to white men; particularly to government officials.

Heavy trade canoes, laden with puncheons of palm oil and lurching along in midstream, and other lesser canoes that lazed in the drowsy morning shadows of the overhanging bush had furnished Crosby with just as little information. No one apparently had seen or heard of the sternwheeler *Vixen;* the *Magpie* had not been seen in any of the waterways that led into Goba or out of it, and the progress Walla's *juju* play was making was a subject beyond the pale of discussion altogether.

"We no *savez,*" was the careful, noncommittal answer to all of Crosby's and Balak's questions even when, within less than a mile of the southerly end of Walla's creek, Crosby's head came up in a sharp, listening attitude. Presently he said to Balak who was questioning a reticent canoeman—

"Listen! What do you hear?"

"Guns," Balak said. "I hear um long time."

"I know. But what kind of guns?"

"Be machine gun. Dey make plenty shoot palaver too damn quick." He waved the canoeman on his way and shook his head a little sadly. "White man *savez* gun palaver too much. Walla be fool."

Crosby scarcely heard. He shouted an order to the launch's engineer and the *Valiant* leaped ahead instantly. If Brant and his machine guns were in action, Walla had not waited for trouble to come to him but had gone in search of it; and if the insurrection had already spread to within fifteen miles or so of Goba . . .

"Look out for good, fast canoe," Crosby ordered Balak. "Maybe so we go need um. *Savez?*"

"Yessah. Eight paddle be all ri'?"

"That'll do. Maybe so we send launch back to Segwanga."

Balak nodded and asked for no further information. None was necessary. Commandeering canoes in the name of the law was an ancient prerogative to Balak, and if reenforcements were necessary, the *Valiant* could carry a message faster than any other craft at Crosby's command.

The spiteful crackle of machine gun fire became sharper, surer and more and more unmistakable; and, punctuating this apparently endless message in lead, came the rattling thunder of volley firing.

Passing canoes, traveling southward, were moving much faster now, particularly trade canoes that had property as well as lives to think about. Their numbers had suddenly thinned out, too, and the kind of canoe Crosby had in mind had

all at once become a very remote possibility.

Side creeks, of course, had swallowed most of them. Only canoes that were compelled, in the interests of their owners' business, to hold to the main creek, stayed there.

Presently Balak touched Crosby's arm to attract his attention.

"What is it?"

"Sof'ly, sof'ly," Balak warned. "Plenty trouble live. I think so Yoruba man catchum plenty hell."

Crosby grunted and nodded and, with a gesture, signaled to the launch's engineer to slow down at the next curve. He was afraid Balak was right. Judging by the sound of the firing and the effect of the fight upon such canoes as were now seen hurrying south, Brant and his Yoruba were conducting a retreat in the face of odds that even machine guns could not overcome.

Suddenly, as Crosby eyed the curve ahead, wondering just exactly what lay around the corner, a four-paddle canoe swept into sight, the paddles glinting sharply in the morning sunlight and stabbing the water with a savage speed and desperation that left very little to the imagination.

Three of the occupants of the canoe would have been unknown to Crosby at any distance. But the fourth!

The carmine silk handkerchief about Nanda's head was a shining mark the eye could not miss, and the moment Crosby spotted it, he shouted to the launch's engineer:

"Cut off that canoe! Don't let it dive into the side creek!"

"Yessah. One time, sah."

THE *VALIANT* raced for the mouth of the side creek which looked narrow and muddy and impossible as far as the launch was concerned; and the four-paddle canoe, very much nearer to the side creek than the launch, came on at even more desperate speed, apparently intent upon the same objective.

And the canoe won. It slipped under a screen of overhanging mangroves while the launch was still a good hundred yards away, and when Crosby had the engineer point the *Valiant's* nose cautiously into the side creek in pursuit, he was quite sure, in the first minute or so, that Nanda had given him the slip.

"How deep this creek, Balak?" he asked.

Balak jerked his head toward a curtain of creepers.

"Canoe live dere," he said quietly. "I think so Nanda want talk fight palaver with you."

"There? Where? I don't see."

"Sof'ly, sof'ly," a voice called from behind the "curtain", and a moment later Nanda's head poked through. "You want look me?"

The situation, as far as Crosby was concerned, was ridiculous or impertinent, or both. But he hadn't time to bother about that.

"Where's the *Magpie?*" he demanded. "And what's happening upriver there?"

Nanda shook her head.

"Walla man done take *Magpie.* Maybe so Walla man go take *Vixen,* too. Maybe so, *Valiant.* Which place you go with dat *Valiant?*"

"Captain Brant catch trouble?"

"Cap'n Brant close die. *Vixen* cap'n done finis' an' Se'geant Gunn catch plenty bullet all over. But *Vixen* engineer be all right. Be him make Yoruba man fight foh dis time."

"MacDodd, you mean?" He's the only white man left?"

Nanda nodded.

"MacDodd be all right. He *savez* fight palaver too much. Which place you go with dat *Valiant?*"

Nanda's voice and eyes were anxious. In fact, beneath her outward calm was a desperation that looked threatening even in the face of Crosby's service revolver. The girl, herself, appeared to be unarmed, but whether or not her paddle boys had weapons, Crosby did not know.

There were, however, quite a number of

questions he wanted to ask, and he thought she would answer them better in the *Valiant's* cabin; would probably prefer to answer them there.

"Come with me," he invited. "I want talk this palaver proper."

He dived into the little cabin and in something less than a minute Nanda joined him.

"Which place you go with dis *Valiant?*" she demanded at once, while Crosby scribbled his message to Lathrop.

"Which place you go?" he countered. "To Segwanga? To your friend Lathrop?"

"*Cha!* He no be my friend. He be fool!"

"Why? What's matter?"

"Walla catch plenty gun and plenty man too much. He no fear soldier man from Segwanga. I think so be besser you send dis *Valiant* to Warri one time."

Crosby's eyebrows lifted. Evidently Nanda did not think very much of such reenforcements as Lathrop and Segwanga could command, and further questioning elicited the blandly offered facts that Nanda had advised Lathrop in Segwanga, the previous morning, that Brant and the *Vixen* should be withdrawn and the task of forcing the entrance to Walla's Creek delayed until the government was ready to attack in adequate strength. Lathrop had scoffed at this advice and had laughed at the suggestion that Brant's little command was in serious danger of annihilation if it persisted in its attempt to force the passage of Walla's Creek.

Brant had apparently tried to follow Crosby in "twenty-four hours" only to find the rather narrow entrance to Walla's Creek choked with canoes and with heavy mahogany and ironwood logs. And after spending the better part of a day and night trying to cut his way through this barrier, Brant had found himself suddenly engaged in a murderous action with impossible odds; an action that had been raging bloodily and disastrously since nightfall the previous day.

THE *MAGPIE* had managed to reach the *Vixen*, under cover of the dark, just a few hours before, when Nanda had made herself acquainted with conditions on board the sternwheeler. But the launch had been cut adrift and the girl, with three colored deckhands who had volunteered to go with her, had managed to capture an empty canoe, and she was now on her way to carry the news, not to Segwanga, but to Warri.

"Bradbury *savez* dis palaver," she said, referring to the provincial commissioner. "He go listen propah dem time Nanda talk. He *savez* Nanda long time. He *savez* Tanner too. Bradbury go fix Tanner and Walla propah."

"Tanner?" Crosby questioned dubiously. "Where is Tanner? What happened to him?"

A sudden savage light leaped into Nanda's eyes; leaped and died—or just slept again and waited.

"Tanner be all ri'," she mumbled reluctantly. "One so-so bullet no fit to kill dat man."

"He's alive!"

Nanda admitted regretfully that Tanner was.

"Which place he be?" Crosby asked.

"He live foh Walla place. Walla make plenty med'cine foh him friend. Walla be good friend foh Tanner long time."

The sneer and the hate in Nanda's voice were unmistakable. She was in this thing on the side of the government for reasons of her own, and she did not appear now to care who knew it. They were not pleasant reasons and Nanda's life would not be worth a bushel measure of kernels if the government failed her. But unpleasant and seamy as these reasons might be, they seemed excellent to Crosby at the moment, because he had a notion he could make very good use of them.

First, however, the *Vixen* must be withdrawn and communication with Segwanga and Warri must be established, so that proper measures might immediately be taken to teach Walla an age-old lesson that would probably assume the

form of shells dropped into Walla's front parlor by a gunboat that would not give him even a glimpse of her guns.

But, in the meantime, the *Vixen* . . .

And then Tanner who was still alive and being cared for so tenderly by Walla, his very old friend . . .

"Why you talk to Captain Lathrop about this palaver?" Crosby asked quietly, as he revised his message to Segwanga and ordered that it be relayed by telegraph to Warri. "Why you no come talk to me first time?"

Nanda paused, her expression sour with disappointment.

"Lathrop be soldier man. He catch plenty gun. You no be soldier man. Gun palaver no be your palaver."

Crosby smiled.

"Soldier man in Segwanga no fit to shoot unless I talk shoot palaver," he explained.

Nanda looked puzzled.

"You be Lathrop cap'n?" she asked incredulously.

"Something like that," Crosby said. "Why you no come talk to me and tell me expedition palaver no good? You *savez* long time that peace expedition palaver was fool palaver?"

Nanda did not answer this at once. Evidently she fully realized, because of the plight of the *Vixen* and from what Crosby had said, that she had put her money on the wrong horse. But there was yet another reason why she had not brought her information to Crosby. And Crosby knew it.

"You thought I was Tanner's friend?" he queried in a low voice. "And Walla's friend? And, maybe so, some time you look black man hang from mango tree on gov'ment beach?"

"*Cha!*"

A stream of Jakri gutturals followed this and then a fitful rain of pidgin. But Nanda's eyes told Crosby that he had guessed—with Denby's timely informative assistance—the real reason why Nanda had gone to Lathrop in preference to coming to him.

He, Crosby, was the law. He was the chain gang and the rope. And if Tanner and Walla were friends of his, one wrong move on her part might have brought the law and the rope to her.

Only necessity had compelled her to come to him at any time; and this only when she had been satisfied that Walla, at least, had gone too far to make any evidence of his against her worse than useless. Also, Crosby was reasonably sure now that the rescue from the *juju* hut, which had been accompanied by such mysterious, signal-like explosions, had been devised and engineered principally by Nanda.

She had needed the launch to reach Segwanga in a great hurry and, because she could not run the thing herself, she had in all probability made a deal with Loko to rescue his white masters if he would give her safe passage without telling the white men she was on board.

Undoubtedly Nanda was an opportunist. Even then, in the *Valiant's* little cabin, within sound of Walla's guns, and with her back to the wall as far as Crosby was concerned, her agile mind scurried in search of something to sell to Crosby in exchange for the freedom and the revenge she so ardently desired.

"What you go do?" she asked, hoping for a lead. "What's matter you come foh dis place without soldier man? Which thief Balak go catch?"

Crosby smiled and eyed Nanda intently for about a minute.

"I want Tanner," he said slowly in a low voice. "*Savez?* Tanner. And you and I—we go get him."

"*Cha!*"

"We go get him. Palaver set."

"*Cha!* You be fool! You no get sense! Your head done rattle like so-so ground nut in empty calabash!"

"Palaver set, Nanda," Crosby said and the finality in his voice left nothing to be desired. "Maybe so you no like Tanner li'l bit. Maybe so you hope he die and maybe so you want kill Walla plenty time dead." Crosby shrugged his shoulders after a fashion that Nanda would understand. "But foh dis time—now—*I*

want Tanner. And we go get him. *Savez?*"

Nanda did.

CHAPTER XI

MORA'S CREEK

LESS than five minutes later, with Nanda seated in front of him. Balak at his back and one of the *Vixen's* deckhands in the prow, Crosby had taken his place in the four-paddle canoe, and the *Valiant* was racing back to Segwanga with a message for Captain Lathrop that would be relayed by telegraph to Warri.

It was not the message that Lathrop hoped for because it ordered him to the rescue of Brant's little force and thereafter to withdraw until Bradbury came up.

Lathrop, as Crosby was well aware, would not like this. He would, in fact, become the most disagreeable officer in the W. A. F. F. (West African Frontier Force) because of it, and he might even exceed his orders and precipitate an advance action in the hope of "mopping up" on his own account.

Crosby wished him luck. He hoped mainly, however, that Lathrop's arrogant tendency to rush into things, with the sublime confidence of all near-supermen, would induce him to rush fast enough to do Brant and MacDodd and the rest some good.

There was little he, Crosby, could do for the *Vixen's* apparently ill fated little company. Little more than he had already done. If two machine guns, plus Yoruba rifles, could not stem the black tide of hate and fanaticism that had swept in upon it—Crosby looked wryly down at his service revolver and thought of a pea shooter in a duel with a Winchester.

Walla, apparently, had guns; breechloaders, too, instead of the muzzle-loaders that were permitted and prescribed so carefully by law. And he had men; many thousands of them who were intoxicated to a fighting pitch with the help of *tomba* and the insidious, maddening effects of four or five days of a deliberately war-like *juju* play.

Just how Walla had become possessed of contraband rifles was one of a number of little matters Crosby hoped to take up with Mark Tanner who was such an old friend of Walla's, and who, as Crosby had no trouble remembering, was principally responsible for instigating the expedition of "peace" to Walla's town.

What Tanner's plan had actually been, and why he had chosen him, Crosby, as the sacrificial goat, Crosby did not know. In spite of his regard for Diana, Crosby believed he had always been fair with Tanner. Always. Perhaps too much so; because it had not, at times, been easy to give Mark the benefit of every reasonable doubt.

In fact, because of Diana, Crosby was afraid he had given Mark Tanner too much leeway; made too many excuses for him and closed his mind to suspicions that, directed against any other man, would have been acted upon, investigated and proved or disproved irrespective of the result.

Crosby's paddle dipped absently in unison with Nanda's, and the overhanging creepers brushed his shoulder and cheek as the canoe slipped swiftly but cautiously toward the scene of the *Vixen's* fight for life and freedom.

The sound of gunfire was growing louder and louder almost at every paddle stroke. The shrieks and screams of blood mad blacks and the incessant accompaniment of tom-toms tore the early morning quiet asunder and, though the eternal mangroves muffled the uproar as with a heavy blanket, Crosby could still hear the rattling fire of at least one machine gun.

"You be fool to go foh dat *Vixen*," Nanda told Crosby for at least the sixth time and without turning her head. "You no fit to do nothing."

Crosby knew this much. But he also knew he would feel much better if he saw with his own eyes that MacDodd had a fair chance of taking the sternwheeler out

of trouble before he, Crosby, went on to attend to his private business with Tanner and Walla.

"Plenty too much canoe live foh Walla Creek," Nanda also told him sourly. "We no fit to go dat way. Mora Creek be besser."

Crosby doubted if any creek in the vicinity was better than another that morning. Certainly none was safe, even though Mora Creek did seem to be altogether deserted and entirely free of any sign of a war canoe.

It was narrow and dark and, though the morning light was strong enough, a spectral gloom hung over it; and, as Crosby quickly discovered, it was apparently the special habitation of a species of deadly black water snakes that writhed and wriggled and squirmed all about him—in the water and out.

"Dis creek be snake creek too much," Balak grunted behind him. "Plenty Walla's town women done die foh dis creek."

"Women?" Crosby questioned quickly and heard Nanda's teeth grind in a most unlovely manner. "Why women?"

No one answered. Nanda's single bladed paddle reached up suddenly, and savagely became a club. A slithering, writhing eel-like thing dropped from a branch into the water and though the down sweep of Crosby's paddle missed it, Balak's caught it and flung it into space several yards astern.

"Why women and not men?" Crosby persisted, listening always to the muffled rattle and rumble of guns.

"White man no *savez* black man fash'," Nanda said surlily, and quite apparently did not thank Balak for bringing up the subject. "Keep you eye out foh dem snake. Dey catch bad medicine too much."

Crosby grunted, but saw the immediate advisability of doing as he was told because the snakes unquestionably were plentiful enough and they were unusually restless, threshing about in the water or slithering from branch to branch in the low hanging mangroves overhead.

"Dey no like shoot palaver," Balak offered from the rear seat, paddling steadily along just as if the snakes were so many eels. "Maybe so dey go 'way from dis place and no more so-so women go die foh Mora's Creek."

"*Cha!*"

Nanda's exclamation had a wealth of venom in it, and Balak laughed—a sound that was like a bass fiddle out of tune. Either he did not like Nanda or he derived a certain ghoulish enjoyment out of discussing a subject to which she, quite obviously, objected.

"Women?" Crosby repeated again. "Why women? Why not men?"

AGAIN Balak laughed and the deckhand in the front seat joined him, and would have gotten the full weight of Nanda's paddle on his head if Crosby hadn't reached forward and deflected and minimized the force of the blow.

A barrage of angry Jakri gutturals filled Mora's Creek for a moment or two until Crosby said sharply:

"Make quiet! What's matter? You go craze?"

The deckhand mumbled into silence and Nanda took a vicious whack at another snake. Then Balak, after a very brief pause, said dryly—

"Men no have baby, Mas' Crosby."

Crosby ducked under a branch that hung too low—a branch on which two writhing reptiles were wriggling away from the menace of Nanda's paddle blade.

"What was that you said, Balak—baby?"

Then, at the same instant, Crosby's jaw hung a little in a rather foolish gaping stare; and, accustomed as experience had made him to all the gruesome sights the Delta could offer, he shuddered.

On his left, in midstream, something bloated and swollen was floating past and the canoe swerved to avoid it. Nanda was muttering to herself and, as far as Crosby could see, was staring straight ahead.

Presently Balak's voice spoke again—almost gently this time:

"Woman who no catch baby go down dis creek in so-so canoe them time moon be small-small, and when she come back—" Balak paused— "*when she come back*, she catch plenty son."

Crosby shivered. He understood perfectly now, and the thing that had just floated past them was just one of many women who had been induced by the priests of Walla's town to cure their barrenness by making the lonely passage of Mora's Creek in a one-woman canoe when the moon was new.

It was just another version of the test of the crocodile pool at Segwanga; just another indication that, in the Niger Delta, where life seethed and multiplied in Nature's most prolific humor, barrenness was the one unforgivable sin.

Crosby fixed his eyes on the back of Nanda's head, and without consciously thinking about it, found himself wondering if she had any children; if she, herself, were not in some danger of a lonely journey down Mora's Creek when the moon was new.

The canoe swerved and swung into a slightly broader creek, and the sound of guns and of screaming slaughter immediately became louder.

"Sof'ly, sof'ly," Nanda warned Crosby. "Plenty soon we go look um. Dis be fool palaver, but be you make um."

Crackling thunder and the smell of gunpowder filled Crosby's ears and nostrils, and it was as if the muffling blankets of mangroves were being removed layer by layer as the canoe crept stealthily along toward more open water.

"That machine gun's still working," Crosby said to no one in particular. "Or else—"

His lips remained slightly parted and the view he suddenly had of the *Vixen* made him catch his breath in a sharp and choking gasp.

Through a screen of creepers Crosby saw an expanse of fairly open water that was choked with dugout canoes and logs of every description.

In the middle of the mass, with a decided list to port, was the sternwheeler *Vixen*. She looked very badly battered; rails bent and twisted, companion ladder hanging crazily askew and swinging limply back and forth, funnels riddled and slanting drunkenly, awnings ripped to shreds, portholes smashed and her upper works particularly turning a pock-marked face to the blood mad world that shrieked and groaned so furiously about her.

But her paddle wheel was slowly churning, one machine gun at least was still making a ghastly shambles of the canoe packed mouth of Walla's Creek, and she was evidently in the process of trying to turn about and show her heels to Walla's hordes if she could.

Down Walla's creek, as far as Crosby's eyes could reach, there was a story of devastation; of the pitiless and terrible effect of machine guns and rifle fire upon massed bodies of men. Canoes that were packed as tight as sardines swung lazily with the tide, rocking their piled up human freight in a last long sleep. Here and there, out of the little hillocks of blue and white chalked bodies, vague vestiges of life stirred groaningly, and upon the mahogany and ironwood logs that had acted somewhat like stepping stones in the rush to board and capture the *Vixen*, grotesquely striped figures of men draped themselves in a ghastly, sprawling confusion that was death.

ON THE *VIXEN'S* decks, Crosby saw not a few of these striped figures in mortal combat with khaki clad Yoruba and every few seconds, as it seemed at first, a Yoruba bayonet dropped one of the scraggly blue and white devils overboard.

Quite apparently, the sternwheeler had traveled astern a considerable distance from her original position when the action had started, and Crosby judged that she had suffered most when she had begun to turn about. This maneuver, aside from being extremely difficult under the circumstances, necessitated a deadly and

expensive delay and a constant changing of the disposition of her defenses.

But, if she were to get out at all, there was undoubtedly nothing for it but to ram her way through and compel the pack of canoes to give way to her superior size and weight.

Between Crosby and any possible approach to the *Vixen* was a veritable sea of blacks, living and dead; a leaping, shrieking madness that lifted and fell, lifted and fell while the machine gun and the Yoruba rifles raked each lifting wave and broke it up into a feeble spray that spent itself in a frothy gesture of rage that sometimes reached the *Vixen's* lower decks.

Crosby supposed the second machine gun had jammed or had been put out of commission and, even though Walla's forces had taken a terrible beating at such close range and at such close quarters, Crosby could not understand how the *Vixen*, even with the help of a searchlight, had managed to survive the black hell of the night, with only one gun in operation.

Then, quite unexpectedly, the gun that had been doing all the recent damage from the after starboard deck ceased firing and, almost in the same breath, a spiteful puttering crackle sounded on the *Vixen's* upper port deck forward.

Crosby almost cheered.

Apparently MacDodd was complete master of the situation in daylight. He was allowing the blacks to mass for each attack and was disposing his two precious guns accordingly. And since the *Vixen* seemed to have lived through the holocaust of the night—

"*E-yaw! Cha!*"

A bullet had imbedded itself in Nanda's idle paddle blade, spun it out of her hand into the water beyond her reach and sent a tingling shock up her arm that sang in her elbow and shoulder like a toothache.

Splintering branches of trees and the hiss of many more bullets pattering into the creek to their left made Balak, Crosby and the deck hand backwater with a unanimity of action that could not have been improved upon if it had been rehearsed for a month.

"I done tol' you dis be fool palaver," Nanda said in no uncertain tone. "Dis place catch bullet all same rain."

"All right," Crosby assured her quietly, above the shrieking horror of Walla's Creek, as another bullet bit nastily into the seat beside him about an inch from his leg. Then he added, more to himself than to Nanda, "MacDodd seems to have better than an even chance of ramming his way out. If he can keep both guns working like that until he turns about, he won't need Lathrop at all— Damn!"

A searing, scorching stab of pain streaked Crosby's side just over the heart. Nanda turned her head.

"What's matter?"

"Nothing. We go 'way from this place one time."

"*Eh-heh!*" Nanda approved whole heartedly, and dodged some splintered branches that fell too close to her nose. "Be good you give me your paddle. White man no be propah paddle boy."

Then, as she leaned back to take Crosby's paddle, she saw a red stain spreading upon his shirt.

"*Cha!* You catch bullet! You hurt?"

"It's nothing. So-so. Just a scratch." The hissing, tearing bombardment of lead had passed. "We go! Make quick! One time!"

CHAPTER XII

THE FRIEND OF THE PYTHON

SEVERAL hours later, in the broiling heat of a West African noonday sun, the four-paddle canoe rocked gently in the grateful shadows of a dark, narrow and slimy little creek not much more than a stone's throw from the mud and wattle heart of Walla's town.

To arrive at this vantage point it had been necessary to travel rather more than twice the normal distance and, most of the time, as it had seemed to Crosby, the canoe appeared to be going away from Walla's town rather than toward it.

Balak, on whom Crosby was placing a kind of official responsibility, had no suggestions or criticism to offer on the subject of their itinerary. Quite evidently he knew exactly what Nanda was doing and why, and the endless twistings and turnings in their course, as the canoe slipped phantom-like from one dark and seamy looking creek to another, did not occasion even a syllable of comment on Balak's part.

Now the canoe had but one occupant—the deckhand of the *Vixen*. Sheltered behind a screen of creepers, he lay at full length at the bottom of the canoe and tried not to go to sleep because, when he slept, he snored.

Nanda was strolling down a bush path that led into Walla's town from the rear. Just where she had been and why she had been there was nobody's business save her own—and Walla's. And if the shambles in Walla's creek meant anything in Walla's life, he was much too busy or preoccupied just then to have either the time or the inclination to bother about a wife who had been missing for a day or two. The chances were, as Nanda had reason to believe and hope, that Walla did not even know she had been away.

Behind Nanda, on opposite sides of the path, lurking behind a mango tree and a wine palm respectively, Crosby and Balak watched the girl very carefully, then, catching her simple signal to follow, slipped quickly down the path until she again signaled to them to seek cover.

A fat and waddling mammy, with two naked and pot bellied youngsters at her heels, crossed the path just a few yards beyond Nanda; and still farther down Crosby spied a sow with a litter of very small pigs digging around with her snoot in the soft roots at the marshy edge of the path. A scrawny, dust colored native in a loincloth appeared to be acting as swineherd and did not seem to care if he stood around in one spot all day.

Crosby leaned against a mango tree mechanically inspecting his left side to see if the bleeding had started again. The "scratch" had been deeper than he thought and it had bled very badly, so that what was left of his shirt was little more than a gory rag.

Nanda had borrowed the sleeves for bandages and several strips of her own Madras cloth had served to bind them in place and keep them there.

She had told him repeatedly that he was a fool; that he would probably be killed; that Tanner was safe enough and that Tanner's white wife could sleep in peace. And she had added quite definitely that Tanner was a swine anyway, and not worth a tenth of the trouble he had made and was still making.

But not once had she revealed, even by the faintest suggestion, who had shot Tanner down or why the peace expedition to Walla's town had developed into such a thoroughgoing war.

However, Crosby thought that Tanner, in a government hospital instead of in a guest chamber in Walla's mud palace, would probably be induced to shed some light on the subject. And, in any event, Tanner had to be brought out.

Crosby chewed his underlip reflectively, kept his right hand on his gun and watched Nanda and the swineherd, and listened to the distant sound of tom-toms, wondering why they should sound so far away.

The girl lounged toward the boy at the typical swaying gait of lithe Jakri maidens who are thoroughly well aware of the fact that they are charming and want lonely males of any and every description to know it.

Apparently the swineherd already knew it. Nanda and he seemed to be quite old friends and presently, after a brief conversation, the youth departed and left Nanda to look after the pigs. In the succeeding few minutes Crosby saw two or three waddling women, with babies held creel-like on their backs, and with calabashes balanced on their crinkly heads, ambling lazily past Nanda and the pigs, also an old white haired man and a very young one, who looked as if he might be a kind of novitiate in the priesthood, carry-

ing a baby python wrapped around a stick.

Nanda minded her pigs exclusively and the passersby, if they looked at her at all, paid no attention to her. And as Crosby watched, he was conscious of a feeling of unreality about the whole business. After the screaming furies that had raged around the *juju* worshipping hut and particularly after the shambles of Walla's creek, the scene before his eyes was altogether too pastoral to be true.

Either Walla's town had miraculously come to its senses and was stunned into silence, or there was something fishy on foot that he did not know about.

THEN suddenly, so suddenly that even Nanda was startled, there appeared a tall, broad shouldered magnificent looking black with a Winchester rifle slung over his shoulder. In spite of the stripes of blue and white chalk with which his almost naked body was smeared, Crosby could tell at a glance that he was no ordinary native, and the ivory rings strung on his forehead and throat were at once indicative of his status in Walla's town society.

He was either a chief in his own right or the eldest son of a chief and Crosby was afraid, in the succeeding minute or so, that if this warrior had been just a little better shot, there would have been no necessity for any one to have done anything for Mark Tanner.

Balak had said that Nanda could not have shot Tanner because she did not know how to shoot. But this warrior with the Winchester undoubtedly could shoot, and in this minute or so of watching, Crosby had no trouble in guessing Nanda's side of this seamy story of native and white intrigue and politics.

Obviously she and this warrior who slung a contraband Winchester so naturally over his shoulder, had their own private ideas on the subject of the pursuit of happiness; ideas that were idyllically in unison; ideas that said as plainly as possible that if Tanner or Walla or any one happened to obstruct their path to peace, the Winchester would have something decisive to say about it.

And Tanner had gone down on the first volley, just as if he might have been a carefully chosen target for a marksman who wanted to make no mistake.

Crosby watched and nodded understandingly, then glanced across the path at Balak who was skulking behind a palm. The question in Crosby's eyes was evidently plain enough to the little special policeman who smiled another of his thin and dusty smiles; and though neither of them dared to whisper even a syllable just then, Crosby's attention returned to Nanda, quite satisfied in his own mind that this warrior of hers had been directly or indirectly responsible for the shooting of Mark Tanner.

Yet it was not anything they did, because there were too many eyes about for any sort of amorous demonstrations; and Crosby could not hear a word of what they said and would not have understood in any case.

But Nanda changed. She changed so completely and abruptly that Crosby gasped.

She was no longer the vampire, the hell cat, the coquette—the female of the species at her vicious best and worst. She was simple and almost child-like and, above all else, she was docile and obedient.

The warrior with the Winchester did all the talking. He spoke rapidly, fluently, and with an unmistakable air of authority. And Nanda listened. Nanda nodded now and then as if it were a privilege; and when it was all said and the warrior had turned abruptly away, she forgot the sow and the pigs and came back to Crosby's mango tree with a staring look in her eyes.

"All man go fight," she told Crosby in a mechanical, faraway voice. "Only so-so women and old man live foh Walla's town."

"Fine. But your friend with the gun. What's matter he no go fight?"

"Walla say maybe so my frien' go die in *juju* court."

"Die in *juju* court? What for? Be him shoot Tanner?"

Nanda winced. Obviously she had not expected Crosby to be so astute. Then, with the sublime fatalism of her kind, she shrugged her shoulders.

"You besser ask Walla."

"Walla! Where is he?"

"He sit down foh him house."

Crosby's eyebrows lifted sharply.

"He's at home, is he? Plenty men look out foh him?"

Nanda shook her head.

"Maybe so ten, twenty so-so man look out for him."

"Hunh." Crosby paused. "Where's Tanner?"

"Walla look out foh Tanner all time."

"I see." Another pause. "What's matter you friend no run 'way?"

Nanda smiled—a slight, fleeting smile that spoke volumes.

"My frien' no fear *juju* court palaver. He catch eye past priest. Python be him friend all time."

Again Crosby's eyebrows lifted understandingly. Evidently the *juju* court was going to stage a python trial. If the accused were guilty, the python that was to act as executioner would crush him to death, supposedly at the instigation of a blind justice, but actually in obedience to the orders of the priests who were credited with unusual ability to command the huge constrictors with their eyes. And if the accused were innocent, of course, nothing of the sort would happen.

Crosby regretted that he did not have time to hang around and see whether Nanda's warrior friend had as much power in his eyes as she claimed he had.

"I see. Be good. Your friend be proper man. He no like Walla? He no like Tanner? He be friend foh gov'ment?"

"Yessah," Nanda said simply. "He be frien' foh gov'ment long time."

Crosby knew he should laugh. He knew the whole business was a kind of stark and grisly joke for the making of which hundreds of poor blue and white striped fools were dying in Walla's creek, and Lathrop and Bradbury and the rest were even then making strenuous preparations to carry on to a still more grisly conclusion.

But Crosby, funny as the situation and Nanda's naiveté seemed to him just then, could not laugh. His side would hurt for one thing, and Tanner and Walla were still alive—one so carefully nursing the other—and Crosby, who was first of all a government officer, felt that something really climactic should be done about *that.*

His hand, resting on the butt of his gun, took a firmer grip.

"All right, Nanda. We go. You *savez* which place we catch proper big canoe? Walla's canoe?"

"*Cha!* What you go do?"

"Your friend, Balak and I—we go take Walla and Tanner for Segwanga."

"*E-yaw!*"

"One time!"

He looked across the path toward Balak whose expression now was almost beatific, and whose revolver appeared from the folds of his cloth like a conjurer's rabbit.

Nanda hesitated, looking at Crosby in staring unbelief, yet at the same time hoping that there might be some vestige of a possibility in the mad scheme he proposed.

"You—you no fear? Walla go kill you proper!"

Crosby smiled, though his jaws were even more grimly tight than they had been when Diana told him that Ketterell meant nothing to her. His gun was out of its holster now.

"Walla's lived too long," he decided. "And I catch good mango tree on gov'ment beach—good mango tree and good rope. *Savez?*"

Nanda's eyes popped wide.

"You no make me fool!" she pleaded. "Oh, Mas' Crosby, you no make me fool!"

Crosby shook his head.

"No, I'm not fooling you. I promise you go look Walla hang—if your friend and you catch sense. *Savez?*"

Nanda almost kissed him. The seething ecstasy in her savage young body wasn't decent.

"Wait!" she breathed. "Wait li'l bit.

I go fix. Me—Nanda. I go fix. I be daughter for Lori Egba. 'Membah? I go fix. Lori Egba be friend foh gov'ment long-time. I be him daughter. I go fix!"

The lithe fleeting wraith of her vanished down the path like the wind. Crosby glanced across at Balak and found the Sobo smiling his thin and dusty smile.

"You go arrest Walla for treason," he told the special policeman. "*Savez?*"

"Yessah."

"And if he resists arrest—"

"Yessah?"

"Shoot him."

"Yessah."

"Palaver set."

CHAPTER XIII

WALLA

WHILE Walla's town still baked in the throbbing heat of midday and only the low suppressed moanings of women folk here and there dared to lift loudly enough to threaten old Walla's siesta, the figure of a white man who had shed much blood staggered into Walla's compound begging hoarsely for water.

"Water!" he croaked as if his throat were ready to crack. "Water! For God's sake, give me water!"

No one paid any attention to him. He was as much alone apparently in Walla's compound as if he were in the middle of the Sahara. The stark, log-like figures that snored in the grateful shadow of the compound wall merely snored a little louder. Not even the guard, propped rather grotesquely on either side of Walla's doorway, had anything to say.

The white man swayed drunkenly upon his heels and looked about him. He wore a shirt that was without sleeves, and a sun helmet that had a bullet hole through the crown of it. The holster that had contained his revolver was empty and his right hand was in a bulging blood red sling that was only a little less bloody than his shirt.

Not many steps behind him, apparently trying to catch up with him and prevent him from going any farther was a tall, magnificently proportioned black who had ivory rings strung on his forehead and throat and who carried a Winchester rifle slung over his shoulder.

And vaguely in the rear of this figure was a short, lean, nondescript individual who just seemed to be one of the passersby taking a drowsy noonday interest in something that did not happen every day.

However, in the doorway of Walla's squat, rambling mud and thatch dwelling was one decided spot of color on which the white man's eyes fell sharply.

The spot of color was a carmine silk handkerchief wound about a woman's head. And as the white man tottered a few steps as if he would surely fall, then straightened up again and stared dully at the flaring blob of color in Walla's doorway, the woman removed the carmine silk handkerchief, refolded it carefully and once more wrapped it about her head.

Again the white man looked about him. But the log-like figures, so starkly stiff in the shadows, did not stir or give any sign of life.

Evidently *tomba*, plus square face gin, plus a drop or two of *Yaka* water and the soporific effect of the noonday sun . . .

The place was like a morgue. And the distant, eery moaning of women who swayed and rocked in the deeper Shadow that, minute by minute, was creeping over the wattle roofs of Walla's town, lent its own tonal effect to the "Dead March" that was being composed for Walla's special benefit.

Still the white man paused. Even in sleep Walla had a thousand eyes and nothing could be taken for granted, particularly where his many wives were concerned.

Then, throwing off the detaining hand of the warrior with the Winchester, the white man staggered up to Walla's doorway, begged the woman in the carmine silk handkerchief for water in a dull, unseeing sort of way, swayed drunkenly on his toes, then sagged slowly to his knees across the threshold of Walla's house.

The woman bent over him.

"Be all ri'," she said in a low voice. "Walla first wife sleep, him second wife catch too plenty gin and him 'nother wifes live foh so-so woman house."

Crosby heard and understood that Walla's wives were all accounted for, but he remained on his knees for a half minute or so before attempting to rise and assume his normal personality.

"Walla sleep?" he questioned thickly.

"Yessah."

"Tanner?"

"He wake. He fear too much. He catch gun."

"Hunh." Crosby came laboriously to his feet, with the warrior standing over him protesting his intrusion upon Walla's privacy. "Go 'way!" Crosby ordered hoarsely. "I want water. Water! Damn you! Don't you understand? Water!"

Nanda and the warrior, whose name was Loma, mumblingly conferred and appropriately gesticulated, each of them gripping one of the white man's arms and holding him upright. And as they conferred, they moved little by little beyond the low doorway into the dark interior of the house.

The nondescript individual, to whom no one paid the slightest attention, followed cautiously. Of course—as any one who might have been watching would have expected—he would be thrown out. Inquisitive, nondescript people of the sort always were, everywhere; and in no time at all he was thrown out by the indignant Loma who cursed him fluently and told him to take his pig's face out of the compound.

But, in a minute or so, he was back again, poking his inquisitive nose in at the doorway, and thereafter sneaking an inch at a time beyond the threshold.

This time, for some reason or other, he was not thrown out.

Whoever chanced to be watching and waiting for developments, watched and waited in vain. Evidently something was happening inside Walla's house; something that was too important or too engrossing to allow any one to bother about throwing the pig faced one out.

And yet there was silence inside the shadowed rooms of Walla's house; the silence of West African midday when all life is still and stark and the sizzling heat flings the children of Old Mother Niger flat upon the ground wherever the shade of mango or palm is deepest.

The first room—the room of the outer gods—was empty. No sign of Crosby or Balak or Nanda or Loma in this room; nor in the second and third.

The fourth . . .

NANDA and Loma standing together; Loma's Winchester no longer slung over his shoulder, Nanda's right hand gripping the hilt of a knife, the blade of which, if the white man, Crosby, failed her, would probably find a sheath in her own heart.

No misunderstandings in the eyes of these two now. This was life—or this was death. And Loma's eye, more potent than the eye of a priest of the python cult, would not save them in a gamble of this sort if they lost.

Between them and the fifth room was a screen of native mats hung from the ceiling and, beyond this screen of mats, four men; two black, two white. Walla and Tanner. Crosby and Balak.

Nanda's free hand gripped Loma's arm.

"Hello, Mark."

Tanner, lean, yellow, weak, propped up in a mosquito curtained bed, stared dully at the gory figure of Crosby, glanced briefly and sharply at Balak, and reached fumblingly under the covers.

"Never mind going after that gun, Mark," Crosby said easily. "You're going to need it so little, we're going to take it away from you. Balak! Get Tanner gun one time!

"But—but Jim! Good Lord!" Tanner whisperingly protested. "What the devil's up? How did you even get here and what are you—"

"Come on, Mark!" The bulging red bandage around Crosby's right hand re-

vealed the muzzle of a service revolver. "Get that hand of yours outside the covers. That's better. All right, Balak. Get gun."

Balak got the gun and backed away from the bed, his sharp little eyes fixed exclusively upon Walla, who was ostensibly asleep.

"But, Jim! They'll do for me!" Tanner protested. "Damn it! You're not going to leave me to those devils!"

"No, nothing like that, Mark. We've come to take you away. You and your friend here. Is he just pretending to be so sound asleep or—"

"That old devil! He never sleeps, damn him! He's just keeping me alive for ransom or torture or some—some—I can't talk—much, Jim," Tanner explained weakly. "It makes me cough and —and another hemorrhage. I'm done for, Jim. That hell cat, Nanda—did this—to me. Sold me out to Walla—and—and the old swine's been keeping me—alive for—for a—" Tanner smiled a ghastly smile, coughed a little and looked terribly afraid until it proved to be a false alarm—"for a Roman holiday."

"Hunh."

Crosby turned his attention slowly and reflectively toward Walla.

He was a shrunken, wrinkled old man with a parchment-like skin and, in size, not much bigger than Balak. He was wrapped from neck to ankle in a voluminous piece of real India cloth from the folds of which, according to tradition, he was likely to produce anything from a quart of Scotch to a field battery.

Just then he was curled up in a Madeira chair that boasted a leg rest, his eyes were closed, his claw-like hands rested on the arms of the chair, and his head nodded and rolled on his scraggy neck with a sudden jerking motion that looked most uncomfortable.

He had done everything the government said he should not do. He had persisted in trading in slaves long after the practise had been officially abolished; he had smuggled arms and ammunition; he had repeatedly avoided his responsibilities in the matter of providing labor for the building of roads; he had continued to exercise the power of life and death over his people, without any trace of a trial, and without any respect whatever for the white man's laws; and he still followed in the footsteps of his fathers in the strictly private ceremonies attendant upon human sacrifice.

In addition to all of which, he was cruel, vicious, treacherous and an avowed glutton for blood. His favorite method of disposing of a wife he no longer wanted was to cut her throat, and about the only thing in his favor was that he never asked any one to do his dirty work for him. He got so much fun out of it, he did it himself.

At the moment, however, he appeared to be sound asleep, and Crosby looked very closely at him to be sure of this.

"Wake him up," Crosby ordered Balak. "And keep gun on him and watch his hand. *Savez?*"

"Yessah."

Balak poked his revolver into Walla's ribs and grunted at him in his own tongue to wake up.

Tanner stared. He stared at Balak and at Crosby as if they were part of the delirium he had been in for a day or so.

"How the devil did you get here? What's happened? Did any one else get hit?"

Crosby paid no attention to him. Walla was waking up, and his eyes lighting first on Balak became instantly aware of Balak's gun.

"Hello, Walla," Crosby broke in before the chief could say anything. "You catch good sleep?"

At the sound of Crosby's voice, Walla's eyes had shifted. They were sharp eyes, sharp and cold and altogether pitiless.

"You come foh *my* house! You put so-so gun foh my belly!"

"Shut up! So-so gun go shoot one time, *Savez?*"

Crosby moved swiftly to Walla's side, dangling the blood red bandage that had been about his hand.

"I be gov'ment commissioner foh Segwanga. *Savez?*"

"You—"

"And I can shoot you like so-so bush dog and all white man say be good. *Savez?*"

"You come foh my house! You put gun foh my belly!"

Crosby clapped the bandage over Walla's mouth, then tied it behind his head, gagging him most effectively.

"But, good Lord, Crosby!" Tanner breathed in horror. "You can't get away with this. You'll be killed. We'll all—"

"Shut up! How sick are you?"

"I don't know,"—weakly. "Whatever went into me is still there."

"Where?"

"Somewhere around the heart. I've bled like hell. Hemorrhages, too. You'll never be able to move me."

Crosby grunted and turned his attention to Walla again, who, in spite of Balak's gun, was trying to get out of his chair and to tear the gag from his mouth. Evidently he could not get it out of his head that he was Walla and that he was in his own house, in his own town among his own people. And he had lived a long time getting accustomed to this idea; too long, in fact, to get accustomed to any other idea. Therefore . . .

"What's matter, Balak?" Crosby asked and drew the gag a little tighter. "You forget order to arrest for treason?"

"No, sah. I 'membah."

And Balak sonorously, in Walla's own tongue, told the old reprobate that he was under arrest for treason.

Walla's eyes spat at Balak and sentenced Balak to many deaths in the succeeding few seconds. Then they leaped toward the bed and fastened themselves upon Tanner in a cold and passionless stare that was without a grain of mercy.

Certainly he was no friend of Tanner's now! It was very plain, too, that he believed Tanner had betrayed him into his present predicament and danger, and that he was afraid—feverishly afraid—that Tanner might escape his vengeance, while he, Walla, even among his own people and in his own house might actually be taken.

"Don't let him!" Tanner's voice whistled, it was so thin with alarm. "Good Lord! Crosby! Balak! Watch him! Look—look—"

A fit of coughing punctuated Tanner's excited fear, but for all that he gripped the bedclothes and flung them up between him and the knife that so suddenly appeared in Walla's hand; a knife that came so swiftly and stealthily from the folds of the real India cloth that wrapped him, that it was biting its way through the upraised bedclothes before Crosby even saw it, let alone have time enough to leap forward and stay the thrust.

A sound like thunder filled the room—a tearing, crashing sound that rent the midday silence asunder.

The acrid smell of powder stung Crosby's nostrils—his ears rang with the recurrent echo of the shot.

Walla leaped convulsively and his claw-like fingers lost their grip on the plunging knife. He sagged back into his chair and curled deeper into the folds of the real India cloth. His head rolled on his scrawny neck till it wabbled to rest on his shoulders, just as if he had gone to sleep again.

Balak stepped away, his emotionless eyes fixed upon his handiwork. Then he glanced up at Crosby and said briefly—

"He resist arrest, sah."

Crosby scarcely heard; scarcely paid any heed. His whole attention was fixed upon the bed—upon the man whose face was hidden by some bedclothes in which three-fourths of the blade of a long knife was buried—the hilt of the thing sticking stiffly upward; too stiffly for the blade to have penetrated nothing more solid than a few upraised bedsheets.

"Mark!" Crosby whispered and bent sharply over the bed. "Mark!"

Tanner made no answer—no move of any sort. Walla and he had been friends for a long, long time.

"And in death they were not divided," Crosby said softly.

CHAPTER XIV

CROSBY'S VISITOR

THE SCREEN of mats between the fourth and fifth room was violently thrown aside. Nanda and Loma gaped at the scene that was revealed to them, while the sound of rising voices and the patter of running feet responded to the alarm of the shot.

Crosby whipped the gag from Walla's mouth and dropped the mosquito curtain around Tanner's bed. A sudden, sharp nausea had seized him and the life seemed to be drained out of him—particularly his legs.

"Out!" he ordered Nanda and Loma thickly. "Tell all man Walla go sleep. Tell all man gun palaver be fool palaver and Tanner make um. Sof'ly, sof'ly. Walla go sleep. Walla angry too much if any man wake him again."

"He done die?" Nanda whispered breathlessly, staring unbelievably at the curled up figure in the Madeira chair.

"Walla kill Tanner," Crosby said briefly. "Walla done die. Palaver set. Make quick! When all man be quiet-quiet, we go foh canoe. *Savez?*"

"Sof'ly, sof'ly," Nanda agreed dully, still gaping mentally at the phenomenon of Walla dead and done with, yet apparently just asleep. "I—I go fix. Be all ri'. Nanda go fix one time." She smiled through the ash-gray pallor that lay upon her cheeks. "And Loma be friend foh gov'ment long time. He go look out foh you proper."

With this final bid for government support in her pursuit of happiness, Nanda, followed by Loma and Balak, vanished into the adjoining room. Crosby slipped behind Tanner's mosquito curtained bed, so that if one or more of Walla's too inquisitive wives poked their heads in at one of the window holes of the room, they would see Walla in a familiar noonday position and could not see Tanner or Crosby at all.

Voices rose and fell, lifted to a crescendo, chattered a while then murmured away into drowsy silence.

A shot? *E-yaw! Cha! Yella-yella!* There had been many shots. Too many. And if old Walla were asleep, what did it matter? Let him sleep. The longer, the better.

Naked feet that had pattered up to Walla's compound shuffled lazily away from it again, dragging weary bodies back into the shadows.

Crosby waited a few minutes more, fighting against the nausea and weakness that gripped him, and took a good stiff drink from his flask in an effort to put a surer sense of life and strength into his legs. Then he put his hand to his left side and found it wet and warm. Evidently that damned scratch—well, no time to bother about it now. He wanted to find Tanner's clothes to see if there were any papers Tanner might have had in his possession that would be of interest to the government, or Diana, or both.

And flung across a camp chair he found Tanner's blood stained coat and in the pocket of the coat a wallet and some letters. He took possession of these, made sure there was nothing else he particularly wanted, took a careful, if blurred and dull look about him, then reeled rather than walked into the adjoining room where he found Loma and Balak waiting.

Loma put his finger to his lips and for a little while no one spoke. Vague murmurs sounded in the compound—murmurs that Loma, apparently, understood. Then they died into a whisper and were gone.

"Nanda go catch canoe," Loma said in a low voice. "She go bring *Vixen* deck boy and we go long way back to Segwanga."

Crosby nodded and his head swam with the effort. But he understood they were to go back by the circuitous northern route, which was longer and safer, and he knew he would be grateful for the comfort of a larger canoe with, possibly, an awning covered deck amidships.

And as he thought of this—of the comfort of it—the nausea that had been fighting for the mastery of his body climbed into his head and made it whirl.

His knees shook as with a palsy and he gripped Balak's shoulder to steady himself.

"You catch sick, sah?" Balak asked quickly. "Maybe so li'l bit gin—"

"My flask—in my hip pocket," Crosby murmured, and promptly slid down into a sudden blackness that seemed to come up and strike him in the face.

WHEN he opened his eyes again Nanda was bending over him, and he was not lying on the floor of a room in Walla's house, but on the mat covered deck of an eight-paddle canoe that had a grass awning and a sufficient number of paddle boys.

There was no sound of tom-toms, of moaning women or of shots, or of the screechings of *juju* crazed blue-white devils that were really very simple children of men gone mad. Nothing like that. Only the rhythmic swish of paddle blades and then Nanda's voice very low:

"You done lose plenty too much blood, sah. But everythin' be all ri' now. Loma look out foh you proper, sah. He be friend foh gov'ment long time. Him and my father, Lori Egba, sah."

Crosby blinked and looked lazily about him, saw Balak squatting cross legged on the little deck placidly eating pork and yams and saw Loma, minus all his *juju* markings and regalia, lounging idly alongside a demijohn of rum, or *tomba*. The ivory rings on forehead and throat were gone. So, to all appearances, was the Winchester. Playtime was over. He was now clothed in a conservative blazer and a piece of rich and respectable Madras. The serious business of life had been resumed.

"How I come foh this place?" Crosby asked, and wondered why the dickens he had caved in so suddenly.

"Loma look out foh you proper," Nanda told him again. "Loma be good frien' foh gov'ment long time—him and my father, Lori Egba, sah."

Crosby smiled. There was a soft and hungry eagerness for that happiness she had dared so much to pursue; and apparently she wanted, above all things, to remind him of the fact that she was a daughter of the eminently respectable Lori Egba, who was, of course, the greatest of all Jakri chiefs and the avowed friend of law and order. Just like Loma.

Crosby let his head sink luxuriously into the pillow Nanda had provided, and closed his eyes.

Tanner was dead—murdered; Walla was dead—executed. And both Nanda and Loma had been of invaluable service to the government and its officers in the interests of peace and in re-establishing the power of the law in Walla's territory and—well, why bother about details, reasons, explanations? Who cared?

In twenty-four hours Walla's rebellion would go out like a snuffed candle, and Walla's town would quake in mortal fear of a retribution more terrible even than the shambles of Walla's creek. And if Nanda and Loma had pursued this happiness of theirs along the shady avenues of native politics and had sold Mark Tanner out in the process . . .

"Tanner no be you friend," he heard Nanda's voice say softly. "Him white wife like you too much. *Savez?*"

Crosby's eyes opened sharply.

"What's that? How do you know this?"

Nanda smiled a slow smile that spoke many volumes.

"When Jakri girl hate some man, she keep her eye out for him all time. *Savez?*"

"I see"—dryly. "You watched him, eh?"

"Plenty too much."

Then Nanda, with a dubious eye upon Balak, explained that she had known both Tanner and Walla more intimately than she cared to remember, and because of this she knew that they had been afraid of each other for years, principally because each knew too much for the other's safety.

Their pretended friendship had been a cloak to cover this fear, and their mutual hatred for government officers had kept the friendship alive long after it had

ceased to make much if any pretense of any sort.

Tanner was a trader. More than this, he was a successful independent trader—meaning that he had succeeded in spite of combines—and he would have been much more successful if government officers hadn't kept so sharp an eye on his methods of doing business. Consequently his hatred of government officers was a thing of long standing, and though he had always been too careful to show it and had always made a practise of enjoying the privilege of calling district commissioners and the like by their first names, his hatred for all branches of the service had reached boiling point when Diana had come to Segwanga.

For she had frankly liked the men he hated so much; liked them, understood them, sympathized with their point of view, called them by their first names, too, at his insistence, and liked to have them return the compliment! And, perhaps, loved one of them.

Nanda did not say which one. Nanda did not pretend to see into the heart of Tanner's new white wife. But she did know Tanner. She watched Tanner and had him watched, night and day—knew almost every breath he drew, every thought that passed through his mind.

Tanner had sold her to Walla. Ruthlessly and in cold blood, he had sold her into what would one day mean a slit throat or a short, dark trip down Mora's Creek. Tanner had done this to her just to keep favor with Walla; because Walla had seen her, wanted her and had suggested that she be counted in on a trade in oil.

SOONER or later, somehow or other, Tanner would sell Walla or Crosby or Ketterell or even his own new white wife in the same way; that is, if Walla did not strike first. Nanda made no mistakes about Tanner, took nothing for granted, gave him not the slightest benefit of any doubt. She knew him. She knew how he could wait, how long and patiently he could plan and how subtly and suddenly he could strike without any great danger to himself. And as he listened to Nanda, Crosby remembered what Diana had had to say about Tanner, and how curiously similar to Nanda's her estimate of this man had been.

Thus, when the time was ripe—when Walla was itching for fight and the sight of blood—Tanner planned to engage the forces of the government on his side in his own way. He planned to have Crosby and his companions destroyed by Walla as one result of the "expedition of peace," while he depended upon the avenging arm of the government to dispose of Walla in due course thereafter.

In the process he had hoped to slip, with his customary adroitness, between two fires, and be standing safely on the sidelines watching Walla being wiped out.

Apparently Walla had had no intention of starting to shoot when that first fusillade had brought Tanner down. Walla, according to Nanda, had intended making a much surer and slower job of disposing of the "peace expedition" than that had been. Brinsley would have seen more than one python if Walla's intentions had been carried out, and those pythons would not have been sleepy and full of suckling pig, either.

Tanner, of course, was to have been held safe from all harm; or, at least, such had been Tanner's belief and hope.

Nanda explained, however, that at this juncture there had been some misunderstanding. Orders misunderstood or miscarried or something. Guns had gone off that had had no business to go off, and Tanner had been shot.

This part of Nanda's story was accommodatingly vague. Of course, she did not know who had shot Tanner. She would never know this. Neither would Loma. Nobody would. It was just one of those unfortunate, inexplicable things that happen now and then to the best laid plans of mice and men. Of course, Nanda wasn't quoting Burns. Crosby did it for her because that was what she meant.

All she apparently did know was that

somebody had started shooting out of turn, Tanner had been hit, and a lot of other shooting promptly followed because everybody with a gun thought that orders had been changed and it was time to shoot.

Nanda tried to suggest to Crosby, in her own strictly African way, that being shot at like that and having a chance to run for one's life, was better than having an interview with Walla when his priests and his pythons were in their best play time humor; and Crosby, upon reflection, was inclined to agree with her.

In any event, Crosby had no doubt now about Loma's part in the affair. He could prove nothing, of course, except that Loma had been in possession of a contraband rifle—which was enough if Crosby chose to make use of it. But, aside from that, he was sure Loma had shot Tanner—just as sure as if he had seen him pull the trigger.

Walla, apparently, had had the same idea, because Nanda admitted that Loma had been blamed for disobeying orders, and was to have been tried in the python's court because of it.

But this, of course, was utterly ridiculous! At least, Nanda said so. Wasn't Loma a friend of the government—just like Lori Egba? Certainly. Hadn't Loma helped Crosby to punish Walla? And hadn't Loma taken Crosby and Balak safely out of Walla's house to his own canoe? Was he not taking Crosby safely back to Segwanga and peace?

"*Eh-heh!* Be so! Be good! Loma be good man! Loma be big man! Loma be friend foh gov'ment long time!"

And Tanner, who had been rescued and nursed so carefully by Walla for purposes of Walla's own, had been no friend to the government. He had been a traitor, a swine, a bush dog without a name.

Crosby closed his eyes again.

Nanda halted and waited. Had she said too much or too little? Had this white man who, she suspected, loved and was loved by Tanner's white wife, just made use of her and Loma for his own ends? She glanced at Loma, who drank his *tomba* like a gentleman and carefully refrained from looking at her at all; then at Balak, who had finished his pork and yams and was apparently giving all of his attention to the glistening drops of water that were flung from the paddle blades.

Presently, without looking at Nanda, Balak said briefly:

"Loma be Mas' Denby frien'. Mas' Denby *savez* Loma long time, sah."

Crosby opened his eyes.

"Yes? Special agent?"

"No, sah. Jus' frien', dat's all."

Crosby nodded, glanced up at Nanda and caught the look in her eyes.

"Be all right," he said simply. "No trouble live. Palaver set."

Crosby closed his eyes once more and hopefully pictured the *Vixen* shooting her way out of Walla's creek; imagined Lathrop's annoyance because so promising an affair petered out so suddenly, heard Bradbury snort his opinion of the whole stupid business and heard Brinsley whining about a lost sun helmet and a beastly python that had not let him sleep a wink for all of one night!

Crosby smiled and another vision blotted out all these; softer, kinder, more in keeping with the whispering lullaby of the paddle blades; the vision of a slim figure in white and the clatter of a polo pony's hoof beats on concrete, growing louder and louder, coming back to him.

No barriers. No lies. No Ketterell, confound him! No possibility, this time, of anything being misunderstood. Even Brinsley and the too eager Mrs. Markly—again Crosby smiled.

If Diana really did like him; if Nanda knew what she was talking about and Nanda usually did, he thought that perhaps a month of sick leave in Las Palmas—perhaps two months . . .

The rhythmic swish of the paddles sang their own lullaby and presently he dozed—then slept. There was nothing else to do; nothing more, at the moment, to think about.

The shadow of the python had passed.

THE END

ALASKA DAYS

Reminiscences of the Gold Rush by a Noted Soldier of Fortune

GENERAL RAFAEL DE NOGALES

IN APRIL, 1904, I arrived in Fusa, Korea, on my way to Japan. The wound which I had received during our landing at Pei-Tse-Wo, on the Liao-tung peninsula, was causing me considerable concern. It was not much of a wound —a mere bullet scratch on my abdomen— but it had begun to fester. It had, therefore, to be attended to carefully and quickly unless I wanted to be laid up for weeks in a clinic. Unfortunately, the hospital ship on which I intended to leave was long overdue.

On the third day, while I was taking my usual stroll along the waterfront, some one patted me on the back and a familiar voice greeted me with a hearty:

"Hallo, there. Still alive?"

It was my old pal, Captain Johnson, of the schooner *Pensacola*, with whom I had spent many a pleasant hour in Amoy at the time of my arrival in China. He was a typical New England skipper and had fished in many turbid waters, preferably in those of the Far Orient. By poaching along the forbidden shores of the czar's Siberian domains, he had managed to open a bank account which mounted already into thousands of dollars.

When I told him my plight he volunteered at once to take me to Yokohama in his schooner, which was scheduled to leave that same night. His offer was a godsend to me, because Skipper Johnson was good company: ever ready to cheer a fellow up with a drink or a witty remark.

Twenty-four hours after our departure the barometer began to fall rapidly; almost too rapidly to suit my taste. An innocent looking bit of cloud near the horizon suddenly assumed gigantic proportions. Daylight gave way to twilight. The long heaving waves turned olive green. An ominous rumbling sound in

the distance announced that the vermilion dragon was bestirring itself once again in the depths of the China Seas.

Soon we were in the clutches of a typhoon which swept the Pacific like an army of furies, while Skipper Johnson looked on unconcerned.

The following night, after the storm had subsided to a certain extent and we had sighted the reflection of numerous lights above the western horizon, where the city of Vladivostok was supposed to be, Johnson actually laughed outright, probably remembering one of his many adventures along those bleak and dreary coasts. But his laughter soon died out. His eye had detected the red port light of an armed Russian merchantman which was trying, apparently, to head us off. Evidently Captain Johnson's commercial ventures were not strictly sanctioned, for he set all sails out and rode the wind for his life. In the night we lost the merchantman. If she had survived the hurricane she surely had put back to port and alarmed the garrison of Vladivostok. The neighboring waters would now be watched.

Cut off from the south, there was only one avenue of escape left us: the Strait of Kamchatka. Steering clear of the Island of Sakhalin, where the Russian revenue cutters were probably lying in wait for us, we finally reached our goal: the eastern littoral of Kamchatka, where we hid in one of its numerous sheltered bays to take a rest and repair our sails.

Realizing that our return to Japan was anything but safe under the circumstances, Johnson and I decided to beat it for the States by coasting the Aleutian Islands and southern Alaska.

During that trip of ours along the northern boundaries of the Pacific Ocean I managed to figure out quite correctly the way in which the Turanian emigration to our continent must have taken place before the opening of the Bering Strait put a stop to it.

After a few days' rest at Valdez, where a veterinary surgeon burned out the festering parts of my wound with nitric acid, we arrived at Skagway. There I parted company with Johnson.

I was in need of a vacation after the harassed existence I had been leading in China. I decided therefore to remain in Alaska for awhile, hunting big game, for Alaska was in those days still a regular hunters' paradise. The caribou were still drawing their thousand and one circles in its somber forests; moose, black and bald faced bears, wolves, mountain sheep, wild geese, ptarmigan and the like were a-plenty everywhere. The streams and creeks were teeming with salmon, trout and greyling.

I remained two days in Whitehorse getting ready for the big trek. Thence I hiked it to Dawson just before the ice-break, which usually takes place during the month of June.

The once opulent city of Dawson, where the Klondike boom had centered several years before, was as dead as a doornail when I got there. The Northwestern Mounted Police were running the place with an iron hand. There were plenty of saloons, but no drunkards or hoboes. Two days on the "woodpile", sawing logs, was more than sufficient to cure even the most inveterate booze fighter and turn him into a thrifty and law abiding citizen. Of its once famous "characters" only two remained: Swiftwater Bill, whom somebody pointed out to me as he was strolling down Main Street in his greasy mackinaw, sporting a battered top hat; and a French count—or rather, no-account—with a waxed mustache, who earned his living as a dishwasher in a restaurant, and who, after working hours, used to parade the streets in swallow tails, white gloves, and a neatly ironed silk hat *à la Parisienne*, proudly perched on one side of his head.

Almost immediately after my arrival the news of a big strike at Fairbanks started leaking out. Old prospectors had driven overland with huge pokes full of nuggets and yellow, glittering gold dust. Everybody was getting ready for the big stampede to the Tanana district, in American territory.

Though I never had, nor have ever suffered, thank God, of gold fever, I decided to join the stampede if only for curiosity's sake. Pete Larson, an experienced old-timer, volunteered to help me get there on a flat bottomed little scow which we hurriedly built with the aid of a saw, a hammer, several gross of nails, and some rotten planks which we fished out of a pile of rubbish near an abandoned saw mill. A week later two woolen blankets, a Yukon stove, two sleeping bags, various cooking utensils and a fair amount of provisions were neatly stacked in our canvas tent, ready for shipment. I had purchased also two hunting rifles, axes, bowie knives and plenty of ammunition, for in the wilds of Alaska every one kills his meat.

Among the various friends which I made in Dawson figured an elderly Jew by name of Iky Goldstein, who owned a bakery. He had taken part in every stampede since the gold rush of 1898, when pay dirt was discovered near Dawson. He was one of the group of old-timers who had advised a chechako to locate a claim on top of a hill, which eventually became famous as the Chechako Hill, because the tenderfoot, following their ironic advice, had dug there for gold and struck a bonanza—much to the regret of poor old Iky who had originally staked that claim but had given it up again because he could not conceive how placer gold could be found on top of a hill.

IKY was a regular encyclopedia on two legs and a big schemer before the Lord. He confided to me that he had purchased for little or nothing an old river steamer which had been rotting for a couple of years on top of a mud flat. He was having it repaired with as little expense as possible because, as he shrewdly surmised, the profits which he expected to derive from its first—and probably only trip—to Fairbanks, would be more than sufficient to cover three times over the price he had paid for the rotten old box. He had booked already more passengers than the derelict could possibly carry without turning turtle at the first river bend.

After days which seemed years to me, the great moment, for which we had been so anxiously waiting, finally arrived. About eleven o'clock on some night of June, I don't remember which, we were awakened by the sound of distant thunder. Larson and I jumped out of the blankets in a hurry. That noise was sweet music in our ears as it grew louder and louder. Suddenly, with a roar like that of an exploding shell, the frozen surface of the Yukon burst in front of us into countless fragments and the onrushing flood wave, carrying enormous masses of drift ice, passed us with a crash that made the earth tremble beneath our feet.

A shout of joy rang from one end of the camp to the other; a mighty, savage prayer of thanksgiving addressed by the waiting stampeders to Mother Nature for opening for them the road to the land of their fondest dreams, where they would be able to dig for gold, for red, shining gold in the bowels of the earth, in the shadows of the silent forests and barren wastelands of the frozen north.

After floating for days down the Yukon amid barrages of drift ice and floating logs, we stopped for awhile at Fort Gibbon to get ready for our strenuous poling trip of several hundred miles up the river to Fairbanks. There we replaced our scow with a peterboro canoe, which was a more appropriate vehicle to buck the swift current of the Tanana.

Only those who have gone through a similar experience know what a trip like that entails, and I find the contempt with which the sourdoughs look usually upon tenderfeet or chechakos who have not attempted such a trip, completely justified.

Larson was used to the game, however, and my adaptability served me well; besides, I had traveled in a similar fashion before, for instance up the delta of the Atrato River, south of Panama, in the teeth of a furious gale. It was, nevertheless, no child's play to pole our peterboro canoe all day, day in and day out, or to

drag it at the end of a rope around the numerous bends of the Tanana with the chilly water up to our necks and the ice cakes shouldering us aside. Occasionally we would notice the bleached skeletons of mammoths partially protruding from the muck strata of the river banks.

I can still remember the surprised stare of a stately moose bull, which was standing knee deep in the muddy waters of a nearby slough. It was eyeing us critically, I think even with compassion, as if thinking that we were a couple of human fools for going through the devil for useless gold and bucking against nature in order to make a living which we could have made far easier by bending our necks to the ground and nibbling at the grass like himself.

After a week of this sort of travel, we decided we needed a rest. We prepared our camp and loafed.

Toward the middle of the day we perceived in the distance a tiny column of smoke which eventually developed into the clumsy hulk of a rusty old boat. She was ploughing up the river with much flapping of wings and a grating sound which made us realize that her engines were about as old as old Methuselah himself. I recognized her at once as Iky Goldstein's de luxe steamer. Iky, in his habitual patched flannel suit, was apparently delivering a lecture to a motley crowd of prospectors and tenderfeet who were crowding the ship's deck from stem to stern.

"Hallo, there, old-timer!" I shouted at Iky, who, on recognizing me, immediately stopped the boat and jumped ashore with a groan, followed by a crowd of angry passengers. To judge by the sour expression on their faces, they were hot after Iky's scalp.

After elbowing my way through the crowd I reached Iky, who threw himself at my feet and moaned, pale as a ghost:

"Save me, kid. If you can't, nobody can!"

Instantly a cry of rage rose from the crowd of infuriated passengers.

"Let's hang the sheeny!"

According to what the old prospector, who was acting as their spokesman, told me, Iky had sold them all first class tickets, meals included, for $200 apiece, with guaranteed good accommodations, while in reality there were no accommodations at all on the ship. The majority of the passengers had to sleep, therefore, on the cracking decks, on wood piles and on the stacked cargo, and to sustain themselves with what little food they happened to have brought with them. Iky, invoking Jehovah and all the holy cats of Egypt, had assured them under oath that it was all the fault of his agent in Dawson who had forgotten to bring the necessary blankets and provisions aboard. Besides the male passengers there were also several dozen infuriated beauties in the crowd—dance hall girls who were after getting gold without having to dig for it, unlike their metropolitan sisters.

After listening to what the disappointed passengers had to say I told Iky that I would not be able to save him unless he gave me the freedom of his boat. He finally consented, and I ransacked every corner of it until I finally produced from somewhere in the bowels of the dilapidated old piece of scrap iron, which he had proudly baptized *Diogenes*, enough liquor and canned goods to make a party and get everybody feeling happy. Then I had our canoe hoisted aboard, and ran the *Diogenes* to Fairbanks, where Iky, with tears in his eyes, put his unwashed, claw-like fist into his trouser pocket and, trembling with emotion, pulled out a soiled five dollar bill, which, after kissing it goodby several times, he reluctantly tried, though in vain, to make me accept in compensation for my services.

The city of Fairbanks consisted, at the time I got there, of a hundred or two log cabins and tent-houses, of which several dozen, along Main Street, were occupied by saloons, gambling dens and dance halls, all of which were doing a thriving business. The medium of exchange consisted chiefly of gold dust, which was weighed over the counters in tiny brass scales. An orange was worth three dollars, a

sack of flour from eighty to a hundred. Nevertheless, before the year had elapsed, the Tanana district had produced more than a million dollars in nuggets and gold dust; and the city of Fairbanks had become the Mecca for many a Western bad man in search of fields in which to exercise his talents. The town's founder was rumored to be a bird who had done time at the Butte, Montana, penitentiary.

WHEN I arrived in Fairbanks, the city was being organized, and the mining records of the Tanana district were being whipped into shape from a haphazard pile of thousands of location notices, most of them written with lead pencil on pieces of wrapping paper and, in many instances, on torn bits of old shirts. These had to be deciphered, coordinated and collected separately before one could think of entering them into regular ledgers. There was confusion, for instance, about dozens of discovery claims of Bear Creek, Moose Creek, etc., because as soon as a miner saw a bear or a moose standing near a creek, he immediately baptized that creek Bear Creek, or Moose Creek, and no one could tell where his claim was located. The putting into shape of those mining records represented, therefore, a herculean task; a regular Chinese puzzle from which even the nerviest officials shrank back with dismay. It is not strange that Fairbanks presently became the happy hunting grounds of professional claim jumpers, shyster lawyers and scores of other parasites.

The respectable citizen who had been appointed through a unanimous vote to the office of district recorder was an elderly, very nearsighted gentleman by the name of Mr. Short. In his younger days, some people claimed, he had alternated cowpunching with faro dealing. He had accepted the job, he said, only "to help the town", and he insisted that "Kid Mendez," who was supposed to know how to write and read correctly, should be appointed assistant recorder.

I did not know at that time, to tell the truth, the difference between a mining claim and a piano. Still, I accepted the job if only to please the old man, because he was a good sport. I had dealt with Congos, Chinamen and Arabs, and I wanted to see what I could do with that pile of papers.

In that manner I became by chance one of the fathers and patriarchs of the city of Fairbanks, Alaska.

The judiciary was represented in our metropolis, before the arrival of Judge Bakersham, of "The Spoilers" fame, by Judge Voss, the justice of peace. Judge Voss was a saloon keeper, very kind and all that, but exceedingly fond of putting on airs. He reminded, or reminds me rather, of a certain extremely meek missionary whom I met in Turkey at the beginning of the World War. When I met him again, after the Armistice, I hardly recognized him, dolled up as he was in an American captain's uniform, with an air of "me and Napoleon", and an unhappy worm of a lieutenant—his adjutant—almost crawling on hands and knees before him.

The first case which came up before Judge Voss was that of a Montenegrin dishwasher who had murdered his pal to get his gold watch. The log cabin which served as court house was crammed to the doors with spectators. I—as a high government official: assistant district recorder—was present, naturally.

While I was comfortably seated on a wicker chair, listening spellbound to the last thrilling pleadings of the defense on behalf of his client—who had probably promised to let him have the watch if he won the case—Judge Voss rose, stroked nervously his drooping blond mustache and, extending his arm with a melodramatic gesture toward the jury box, exclaimed in a thundering voice—

"Gentlemen of the jury, pride of the nation, it's up to you to decide—!"

Whereupon the pride of the nation and the gaping audience broke out into uproarious laughter and let out a series of cat calls which caused poor Judge Voss to blush to the roots of his hair and hit

the trail of his saloon in a way which was anything but dignified.

Another prominent citizen of our community was Archdeacon Stuck, who was always dreaming of the ascent of Mount McKinley. The dream of his life eventually came true because, several years later, he actually was the first to reach the summit of that famous mountain. He had built behind his chapel—which served him as sanctuary, sleeping room and kitchen—a shack in which he used to lock up every evening, after six o'clock, half a dozen chickens which he seemed to treasure above all the gold nuggets of Alaska. As during part of the month of July, if I am not mistaken, the sun hardly ever sets south of Fairbanks, because it lies almost upon the Arctic Circle, the archdeacon claimed that unless he locked up his chickens after 6 P.M. they would forget to sleep and die of insomnia!

Three miles west of Fairbanks, on the right bank of the Tanana River—for Fairbanks is situated on a river island, on the left shore of a slough which rejoins the main stream near Chinoa—I had staked a group of claims, because on that particular spot game was plentiful and fishing excellent. Hardly anybody ever went there to poach on account of the three mile stretch of swamps which separated my hunting reserve from the city. It was also unapproachable by water because of some big rapids which rendered navigation on the Tanana River almost impossible above Chinoa.

During the various months which I spent in Fairbanks, trying to straighten out its mining records, I used to spend my leisure hours hunting and fishing in that little domain of mine, where I had built a cabin and rigged up a meat cache.

One morning, while I was crawling through the underbrush, stalking a moose, I ran into a queer sort of citizen: a bald faced bear cub which, on catching sight of me, straightened up like a little man, bared its tiny fangs and walked resolutely in my direction with blood in its eyes. Remembering that bald faced bears are wont to attack a man wherever they meet him, I tried to scare the cub off by throwing a stick at it. Finally, seeing that the youngster meant business, I fired, first, a shot over its head and, as even that would not impress him, I felled it, but not before I had pumped five shots into him. Those creatures are regular die-hards.

As I was examining the riddled fur of the poor little fellow a vicious snarl caused me to look around in a hurry, and to do some tall thinking, for the grief stricken mother of the cub was rushing toward me in a business-like way.

Calculating that if it had taken me five shots to down the cub, it would necessitate twenty-three to give its infuriated "ma" the knockout drops, I wisely decided to take to my heels. Which means I grew wings of a sudden, and never stopped until I reached Fairbanks after a three mile race which fairly took the wind out of me.

Shortly after that I had a similar experience with a white Arctic owl which apparently resented my intrusion on its privacy.

While I was approaching the top of a tall pine tree, whence I intended to spy on a flock of wild geese near the river bank, a swishing sound caused me to look up and to fall nearly to the ground, for less than a yard above my head a giant Arctic owl was staring at me with its two inch wide yellow eyes. Its wings were partly opened and its vicious, hooked talons, about the size of a man's hand each, were opening and shutting, almost directly in front of me. I don't remember exactly how I climbed down that tree, but I certainly did it in a hurry.

AS SOON as my nerves had quieted down sufficiently to allow me raise my rifle, I brought the owl down with a broken wing and, after hog tying it properly, I carried it to town still alive. On approaching the outskirts some one shouted:

"Hey, boss, where you get that chicken?"

It was Sam's voice, a Tennessee negro whom the citizens of his home town had grubstaked in the expectation of big returns for their money. Unfortunately Sam, after reaching Fairbanks, had lost his stake shooting craps and, not daring to return to Tennessee, had engaged in the profitable business of shoe shining.

After sizing up the owl and weighing it carefully he suggested that I leave it with him on half interest—because, he said, he had a great idea. And it was an excellent idea all right, for that same night Sam handed me eleven dollars, equivalent to half of the amount for which he had sold the owl to a Seattle collector who wanted it for some museum.

By Christmas, 1904, that is, six months after my arrival, Fairbanks had become quite a town. During the summer months swarms of speculators and commercial parasites had flocked into the Tanana district looking for easy pickings. The city's real estate was experiencing a boom similar to that of Florida several years ago. Even horses were being imported by the score, which was a crime, because after the first excitement, when imported fodder was no longer available for lack of transportation and ready cash, most of those unhappy creatures were turned loose in the woods where they finally perished of hunger, cold and thirst, for, with the exception of a few hot springs, every river, rivulet, creek and spring in Alaska freezes up during the long winter months.

I may as well mention as a matter of curiosity that, with the possible exception of its warm southern coastal belt, the peninsular of Alaska is, and will remain always, a frozen wilderness. The reason is this:

Once upon a time the gigantic layer of eternal snows which used to cover Alaska, like Greenland today, loosened, owing to the sudden change of temperature caused by the shifting of the warm Japanese current in a northerly direction; and, gliding gradually, similar to an enormous glacier, toward the North Pacific and Arctic Oceans, those masses of ice erased the summits of the Central Alaskan mountain ranges until there was nothing left of them but a series of undulating cones and ridges, of different sizes, which are called hogbacks today. These were originally bare except for a thin layer of metallic dust, because the deposits and veins of the different metals which those mountains contained were ground to dust during the terrific crushing process which resulted from the loosening and gliding of those giant masses of snow in a westerly and northwesterly direction.

After the surface waters had washed that layer of metallic dust into the Arctic Ocean and the Bering Strait—for toward the south the Alaska range blocked their way—the only metal, so to say, that remained, was gold; the gold dust of the ground-up ledges which, owing to its excessive weight, sank the deepest and remained caught in the rocky fissures of the prehistoric streams and rivulets. These were gradually covered by a layer of muck, or vegetable earth, which the disintegration of the forests continued producing and depositing for ages on the shores of the Yukon and its countless tributaries.

The way the prospectors look today for bedrock, or pay dirt, in the rocky fissures of the prehistoric streams, creeks and rivulets of the Alaskan wilderness, consists of thawing with the help of steam boilers and bonfires narrow vertical shafts, sometimes over a hundred feet deep, out of the layer of muck, or vegetable earth, of which only one yard and a half, on the surface, thaws out during the three or four summer months.

Owing to that fact the trees in Central Alaska do not drive their roots in a vertical but in a horizontal direction, and its enormous virgin forests are turned every year, during the months of June, July and the early part of August, into extensive boglands and partly impenetrable forest swamps which render agriculture, on a reasonable scale, absolutely impossible. That is why Alaska is and will always remain a frozen wilderness and why its scant population will always

depend on timber, metals, fish and game as their only means of subsistence.

By Christmas, 1904, Fairbanks sported among other social centers an Elks' Lodge, where most of the fashionable entertainments of the city were held. For, by that time, a regular "society" had sprung up, led by Captain Bennet's husky wife. According to gossip Mrs. Captain Bennet had acted as a cook in some mining camp before prosperity had knocked at her door. In spite of furious manicuring she did not seem able to erase the marks of her former profession from her shapely hands.

The Beau Brummel and male society leader of the town was one of Captain Bennet's legal advisers. After the boom was over, that gentleman did some time and became very popular in a fashionable penitentiary on the Pacific Coast. I met him afterward in Nevada, where he had worked up a new practise and had become once more a "respectable citizen" and a prominent lawyer. Such are the ways of the West.

Being, through force of habit, fond of social life, I used to attend some of the city's fashionable events dolled up in a second hand Tuxedo suit, which I had purchased from an itinerant vaudeville player, and a pair of old patent leather shoes which Archdeacon Stuck had presented to me as a birthday present, for the archdeacon and I were close friends.

One night, shortly before Christmas, while I was attending a dance at the Elks' Lodge, I happened to overhear the whispered conversation of Crummy Pete and Irish Stew Joe, a couple of notorious stampeders, while they were admiring through an open window our wonderful display of luxury. According to their conversation, their and two other outfits were going to meet at dawn near a certain cabin, several miles down the slough, to start out for some diggings near the foot of Mount McKinley, where several old-timers were reported to have struck it rich. Their whispered conversation sounded like music to me. Immediately I sneaked home, changed my evening clothes for a wolverene parka and a pair of soft traveling moccasins, and two hours later I joined Pete, Joe and the other two stampeders who, after wrangling for awhile about who was going to be the leader, finally compromised by appointing me captain of the expedition. A trust I took very seriously and endeavored to live up to as best as I could.

After crossing and criss-crossing for several days the frozen wilderness, without finding any traces of the longed for new diggings, we reached the foothills of the Mount McKinley range, where we rescued a couple of prospectors whom the wolves had kept penned up in their shack for over a week. They finally confessed that they were the originators of that false report by means of which they hoped to draw the attention of the Fairbanks mining operators so as to start a boom in their new placer fields.

BEING footloose and having nothing particular to do for the moment, we pushed on until we reached a divide from where we could look down into the Kuskokwim Valley, which only few prospectors had visited up to that time.

Toward the middle of January, 1905, after our wild goose chase to the foot of the Mount McKinley range, I started out of Fairbanks in a morning mist, with the thermometer at fifty below zero. The smell of early smoke was in the frozen air, and sleepy gamblers and saloon rats were ambling their way home over the wooden sidewalks. My sled was drawn by seven husky malamutes which pulled at the ribbons, obeying the intonation of my shouts. At Dome Creek, MacDougal's team was waiting to join the party. We were going to hunt caribou and wild sheep in the White Mountains. MacDougal, or Mac for short, was a nondescript character, whose career seemed to have been varied and vague. I sized him up as a gentleman who had become tired of walking on dead man's legs and had decided to walk on his own. He was extremely taciturn. He could spend whole

days without saying a word, and that gave rise to all sorts of rumors. He was credited with several aliases. Some of the men said that he had distinguished himself as an officer of the Northwest Mounted Police, and I also heard whispers to the effect that he was the "blue parka man", a bandit whom the shrewd president of a local bank in Fairbanks was supposed to have hired to scare the mining operators in the creeks into sending their clean-ups to town by means of the bank's armed messengers. These, naturally, on arriving at Fairbanks, turned the gold remittances entrusted to them over to "their bank", where those values remained deposited, drawing interest, or paying a fee for safekeeping until further notice.

If Captain Bennet really had hired the "blue parka man" to stage those holdups, as most people claimed he did (for there is usually some truth in rumors when 90% of a community believes them to be true) then Captain Bennet's was an exceedingly clever way of forcing people to deposit their money in one's bank.

At any rate, holdup man or no, MacDougal was true blue, and my closest friend during the year and a half which I spent in Alaska. We happened to meet once, accidentally, on the trail, and from that time on he had stuck to me through thick and thin. He practically became my shadow. I never asked him how he made a living, nor cared to, for that is one's own business. The only thing I knew for certain about Mac was that when I needed him, he was there, always and unconditionally and without asking why. All he and I required to be happy were our Winchesters, hunting knives, sleeping bags, some plugs of tobacco, a pocketful of salt and our dog teams or birch bark canoe, on which we shot the rapids of many an unknown river just for the hell of it, simply as a way of gambling without money. It was great sport, real men's sport.

During those expeditions we used to live on the game we shot, and spent the nights like a couple of Arctic tramps stretched out before the camp-fire, chewing at our pipestems, dreaming with open eyes under the moonlit sky of the Northland, while the waters of a mighty river flowed past us like a giant stream of molten silver, and the mournful howl of the hunting pack floated to us over the slumbering forest.

During those silent nights I used to look occasionally back into the past, remembering perhaps some exciting hunt, as the one when I bagged my first moose. I chased it on my snowshoes, not heeding Mac's warning shouts, following its heavy blood spoor, until the poor brute, maddened with fear, loomed suddenly in front of me as big as a church, with its eyes glowing like drops of sulphur. I was so scared that before I finally disposed of it, I actually tried to climb a tree with my snowshoes on.

I always laugh at tenderfeet who claim that they don't know what fear means. If I had a dollar for every time I have been scared—scared out of my wits—I would be wealthy. That feeling does not imply by any means that a man is a coward at all. Real bravery consists in one's capacity for overcoming the first nervous shock and then acting intelligently.

That January morning, after a hearty breakfast, MacDougal and I hit the trail in an easterly direction, following the frozen course of the Chatanika. Creaking windlasses and brownish heaps of pay dirt loomed through the mist on both sides of the trail. The faint gleam of a half spent oil lamp shone sleepily through the paper window of a prospector's cabin.

We crossed the ice bound surface of the Tolovena River on the run, and beyond it the frozen wastelands stretched out before us like an endless wrinkled sheet, pierced here and there by snow covered ridges and hogbacks. Fresh wolf and moose tracks crossed in every direction the glittering swamps, dotted with niggerheads and patches of golden reddish willows. It was a wonderful winter day, the kind a hunter is wont to dream about. On the blue distant skyline the White Mountains glittered like living jewels.

At noon we had a hasty bite, warmed Alaska strawberries—red beans—fried bacon, a couple of flapjacks, coffee and a pipe, and we went on toward the mysterious divide over which "dead man's trail" was supposed to lead to Old MacCarthy's cabin.

Then the weather began to change. The snowflakes started to flutter down, innocently at first, then ominously. Gray clouds were hanging heavily over the snow covered, wooded ridges. Half an hour later MacDougal and I were limping blindly behind our teams in the midst of a raging blizzard. The cold bit through our parkas and moccasins, freezing our skin. With half closed eyes, slipping every now and then on some frozen overflow, we stumbled on, having our hands full keeping our sleds from overturning and rolling down the slopes, while the leaders, with their noses close to the ground, led the teams on, bravely pulling at their ribbons, yelping, tugging and scrambling, trying to locate in the blinding snowstorm the trend of the mysterious "dead man's trail".

Shortly after midnight we crossed the divide. The blizzard had blown over as whimsically as a tropical storm, and the sky was filled with stars dimmed toward the north by the purple light of the Aurora Borealis. Wolves howled in the distant hills. In the nearby forest a moose crashed heavily through the underbrush.

We went on downhill, toward the frozen valleys of the barren wastelands, until the distant barking of dogs led us to Old MacCarthy's cabin.

After supper I explained to the old prospector how we had braved the storm and finally hit the trail. Whereupon Old MacCarthy nodded once or twice and, taking the corncob pipe out of his toothless mouth, remarked, with a somber smile:

"And the snow is still falling on the same old trail. It was fifty years ago, my boy, when I, a young college graduate, crazed by gold fever and full of life, like you today, also crossed the forbidden divide—and now look at me! And the snow is still falling on the same old trail . . ."

After that I didn't know where I was going, but I certainly was headed back to civilization.

I prospected for awhile in the Forty Mile district with old Doc Stevens. Unfortunately, while we were mushing across country in quest of some lost treasure which was supposed to be buried beyond the headwaters of the Porcupine, Doc Stevens died of pneumonia, leaving me an orphan once more.

At Nome, where I arrived just before the big fire, I missed the last steamer south, and decided to leave for the outside by way of Siberia.

I rounded the Cape Prince of Wales on a whaling steamer and thence mushed on over the frozen tundra, with a pack on my back, until I reached the village of some friendly Eskimos who took me across the Bering Strait on an *ummiak*. But the coast of Anadir, on the Asiatic side of the Strait, was dead. Not even a sailing vessel was to be found and not one was expected there before the next Spring. So I was compelled to mush it back to Alaska by dog team after the freeze-up, crossing the open leads of the Strait in my sled, which I turned into a sleigh boat by wrapping its bottom with seal skins, sewed together and rendered waterproof with walrus tallow.

After driving up the Yukon for about a week, I took a short cut along the foothills of the Mount McKinley range, and headed for the Copper River country, on my way to Valdez.

The trip was not pleasant, for the thermometer kept consistently at more than fifty below zero, but I had plenty of grub for myself and dried salmon for my dogs. So I didn't have to worry. Sooner or later I was bound to reach my goal. It was only a question of grit, and I mushed blindly into the interminable blizzard until, after ten, or maybe twenty, days I finally reached Valdez.

From there I traveled to Nevada, where the great gold boom of 1906-7 was already under way.

GAUNTLET SWORDS

By VAL LEWTON

WHAT with airplanes, tanks, poison gas, smokeless powder and many other ingenious engines of destruction playing such an important part, cold steel has been relegated to an insignificant place in the scheme of modern war. Still the sword retains its place in symbolism as well as in the affections of the romantic, and the curious uses to which steel blades were perverted in remote times are not without interest in this day of long range battle.

Gauntlet swords and daggers, which are in effect merely steel boxing gloves with a blade attached, are perhaps the oddest forms in which swords have been made. Most interesting of these gauntlet swords are the yatagans of Caucasia, Armenia, Afghanistan and northern India. Primarily designed as a horseman's weapon, the yatagan was at first a combination of mace and sword.

In the days of heavy armor it was customary first to batter one's opponent's protective armor to pieces with some blunt instrument and then hack his person to bits with a sharper weapon. The Scythian horsemen were always armed with a heavy triangular mace and a sharp, curved sword. In the Caucasus where it is all that a good horse can do to carry its rider up the steep inclines of the mountains, this combination of mace and sword, when added to the weight of the rider's body armor, lance, shield and heavy casque, was just a bit too much for the animal to carry.

Some clever fellow decided to combine the sword and mace in a single weapon. The logical thing to do was to make his blade straight and reversible, have one edge blunt and the other sharp and so design the handle as to make an easy grip for either edge. To add weight as well as to protect the hand, a large hilt piece was attached, which in time developed into a gauntlet. The hand was placed into this steel gauntlet as into a glove. Inside the gauntlet, a cross bar was attached, and the fingers were gripped about this piece. In course of time the Eastern horsemen who used the yatagan shortened the blade so as to strike a punching rather than a sweeping blow, and at this time in the development of the yatagan, it was the point and not the sharp or blunted edge which was used to strike.

In Europe a similar type of weapon was developed, but it was seldom used and existing specimens are rare. This weapon was the rein-poniard that had a slight vogue in the Maximilian period. As body armor was perfected to a high degree, the usefulness of the shield came to an end, and it was finally discarded for every use except for tourneys and parades. This left the knight with his left weaponless.

The fact that he held his reins in this hand made the use of the dagger or poniard difficult. To overcome this weakness in the mounted knight's defense, the rein-poniard was invented. This was merely a sharp steel blade attached to the back of the left gauntlet, and with it the knight could strike a powerful blow and still keep a grip on his horse's reins.

Perhaps the last example of the weapon with which one can both strike and stab was the trench knife issued to the American troops during the World War. When held properly, this knife, with its short blade to stab with, and its serrated hilt guard to strike with, became a deadly and effective weapon. It was as if a man wearing brass knuckles held in the same hand a dagger.

A Novelette of the Philippine Scouts

By CHARLES L. CLIFFORD

ONE DAY Hoyt got homesick for the *bosque*. So intensely homesick that something had to be done about it. Even in the clear mountain air of northern Luzon he smelled at night the damp mold of the jungle floor, the sweet, sickening odor of the hot jungle flowers. In his dreams he could hear the screech of the cockatoos and the thin, quavering call of the young monkeys. He had to go back.

They understood in Manila. And so a week later he was on the inter-island transport *Warren*, bound for that desolate port of call, Kiethly. The major in command of the Philippine Scouts battalion there looked curiously at Hoyt.

"Most of us here would like to go up to Baguio," he said, "and here you ask for hell."

"I know it, sir. The worst of it, though, is leaving my own outfit."

"Macabebes, eh?"

"Yes, sir. We put in our share of time down here in Mindanao. But I can't seem to get the place out of my blood, somehow."

The major smiled.

"You'll find the Illocanos just as good. Not as cruel, perhaps, but damned good fighting men."

"They told me I'd come as near to active service here as there was," the lieutenant said hopefully.

The major looked at him. He wondered how much Hoyt had heard of Carlin.

"As a matter of fact," he said, "things are quiet here. But I'm sending you up into the hills with the 61st Company. There's been a bit of trouble with outlaw gangs there. They come down on the *taos* and steal their cattle and women and play hell with their crops. Carlin's up there. Ever heard of him?"

The major hoped he had never heard of Carlin except in the "Army List & Directory." He had a feeling of guilt in sending this new man up there. Still, it was the only vacancy for a lieutenant

HOYT *of the* MACABEBES

in the battalion and the damned fool had asked for a transfer from a soft billet with the Macabebes. While he eyed the lieutenant across his desk and felt immensely sorry for him, he made a mental resolve to do something about Carlin.

The lieutenant said with a slight shrug:

"There's always a lot of talk about the peculiarities of these old captains. Seems like I heard somewhere he's death on lieutenants . . . No, sir, I never have met him."

The major felt that for a lieutenant this chap was a little brusk when it came to discussing his superiors. Maybe because of this he did not add what he had intended as a final bit of advice as regarded Carlin. Young whippersnapper probably thought soldiering with the Macabebes put him above advice from a commander of Illocanos.

Hoyt was to leave the next morning for Buldong, Carlin's post in the hills. At mess the other officers of the battalion looked curiously at him; but none of them warned him. They thought, pos-

sibly, that he might duck the job, since he seemed to have pull enough to get himself ordered here from Manila. And if he did duck it—well, one of them might be sent up there with Carlin.

Nobody told him about Caperton, the last lieutenant who had been with Carlin. Caperton had come riding wildly into the post one blazing day, his pony lathered, himself a raving maniac. He dripped with blood from a dozen *barong* slashes. He died in the post hospital without speaking one coherent sentence. Some of the words and phrases though, of his wild delirium, had provided a month's gossip in the garrison. Until the monthly transport had come in. Most of it was forgotten now. Hoyt had heard something about it even in Manila.

Carlin's report was vague. It merely said that Caperton was constantly drunk, under charges for insubordination, and one night had fled the camp. The *barong* wounds had probably been received along the dangerous trail from Buldong to the post at Kiethly. . . .

The major wondered and worried. The lieutenant before Caperton had resigned. Said he couldn't stand the horror of loneliness at the one-company station. Before that Carlin had got along without a lieutenant. Had, in fact, insisted that his company ran better without one. And the major, who was wise in the ways of these old Scout captains, had thought it better not to insist. He never asked for the one lieutenant his battalion lacked. But now this Hoyt had been foisted on him by Manila. Well, it was his own tough luck. And when it came to choosing between Carlin and a mere lieutenant . . . After all, there were few men in the Scouts who could put the fear of God into the *Lanao* Moro the way Carlin could. Devil Man they called him up there in the hills.

At daybreak a platoon of Scouts marched silently out of the post and into the steaming jungle trail. They were the escort for the new lieutenant who was going to Carlin. The little brown soldiers were silent, watching with furtive eyes the new *teniente*, thinking their own curious thoughts. Wondering what his end would be. Soon he would come back—or probably never come back. The soldiers of Carlin's company told strange tales of that *diablo capitan*.

Hoyt strode at the head of the file of men, his alert eyes on the "point" as it weaved through the twisting trail. The bright sun sent patches of light down through the giant trees. The creepers tore at his putteed legs. The morning was cool. The jungle smell was in his nostrils. Birds flitted like bright motes in the shafts of sunlight that cut blindingly down through the heavy green mat of the jungle.

Hoyt was happy. His heart beat with the glory of youth. Here was what he wanted from life. Ahead lay excitement, fighting men. His men, waiting for him. Even now in this bright, green, quiet place, a shot might ring out. Monkeys would scream, the young ones hugging close against their mothers. Birds would fly swiftly out of the packed verdure, alarmed at the alien sound. He would give cool, crisp orders, his men crouched along the trail behind him, firing quickly and carefully into the blackness of the jungle beside the trail. It would be great to start so soon!

IN THE LATE day they came to Buldong. They came upon it abruptly, in a clearing by a foaming mountain stream. There was the grim stockade with its pointed stakes. On the other side of the stream was a huddle of native huts. Hoyt was surprised at the native village so close to the fort.

"Is there a *barrio*, Sergeant?"

"The *bahais* of the women, *Teniente*."

"Women? Up here?"

The soldier spat and looked at the lieutenant curiously.

"Soldier got to have women, *Teniente*."

Hoyt thought.

"So that's one of the ways Carlin had of keeping his men behind him."

Now they were out on a grassy plain.

The stockade walls gleamed in the setting sun. A gun boomed out, shaking the jungle behind them into new life as its dull echo reverberated. The flag, whipping at the tall pole above the fort, shook on its halyards. The faint notes of "To The Colors" came to them.

"*Muy triste,*" the sergeant said under his breath. "A sad music, that 'Colors', *Teniente.*"

Hoyt halted his little command and formed them in line, facing the slowly descending flag. The little brown men, their faces set in impassive, expressionless lines, stood rigidly at the "present," staring at that alien flag that was their own.

They resumed the march when the little ceremony was over.

"What was that gun, Sergeant? They can't have a reveille gun in a place like this."

"El Capitan Carlin—" the man broke off, looking vaguely toward the fort.

Hoyt stared at the man sharply. What was all this mystery about Carlin? Now that he thought about it, everybody he had spoken to about his new captain had evaded actually answering a question about the man. Did he have them all bluffed? Was he, Hoyt, who was a first lieutenant and who had served in a dozen desperate scraps with the deadly Macabebes, expected to take a lot of eyewash from this gang of Illocanos?

The sergeant noted the ugly gleam in the new *teniente's* eye. He also had heard from a corporal in his company who had been in the fighting at Bud Dajo that this *teniente* was a tough *hombre.*

"Capitan Carlin got *lantaker,* sir."

Hoyt laughed.

"He must be a theatrical so-and-so," he said to himself. "Imagine firing a Moro brass cannon as a ceremony in a one-company station in the hills. The man must think he's a general in command of a brigade post!"

The sergeant was smiling as though at a great and mysterious joke. He liked this hard lieutenant who had fought with the Macabebes.

"Piccaninny cannon, *Teniente.* You see them that time at Bud Dajo, I bet, when the Moro he fill them with nails and stones."

"I *felt* them at Bud Dajo," Hoyt said, and mechanically he rubbed his left arm.

The sergeant laughed.

The lieutenant said:

"Has he—Captain Carlin, got a band?"

The irony was lost on the soldier.

"No got, sir," he said.

Hoyt could see a crowd of curious soldiers peering from the firing step of the stockade and lounging about the big gates. Against one wall of the fort, stuck like a giant fungus, was a large, well made *nipa* thatched house. On the porch he saw a figure in white.

"Must be Carlin," he thought.

The first sergeant of the 61st met Hoyt at the gate of the stockade. Arrangements had been made for the bunking and messing of the escort platoon, he said. He saluted Hoyt briskly, but the lieutenant noticed that he avoided directly meeting his eyes. From the veranda of the house Carlin watched.

His men taken care of, Hoyt walked toward the house, his eyes on the man in white, who stood looking at him. He wondered if he could bathe before dinner. And what sort of chap Carlin was. After all, when you had to look at a man, the only other white man within miles, day after day and talk with him at night, it was important what sort of man he was.

Hoyt walked briskly up the clean dirt path that led to the house. There were flowers about and the whole place gave the air of being carefully tended by an expert. A table was spread on the porch for dinner. Hoyt was surprised at the whiteness of the cloth and the gleam of glass and silver. You might think the layout, with its flower centerpiece and its whisky gleaming in a cut glass carafe was a special party table in the Manila Hotel dining room.

With a heightening of interest Hoyt looked at Carlin. He saw now that the man wore a mess jacket, the gold shoulder knots impeccably bright, the lapels stiff

with starch. What in hell! Out here in the *bosque*, miles from civilization, surrounded by outlaw Moros who might be at your throat any minute—and this bird standing here with his brave gold shoulder knots as unconcerned as though about to sit down to dine with the governor-general. He did himself well out here in the wilderness.

Hoyt wondered a little at Carlin's standing there, immovably watching him. Why didn't the man come forward, smile, call a word of greeting? Even grin? Wasn't this a godsend to him: another white man in this desolate outpost?

CARLIN never moved, just stood there staring at him. Now he could see the man closer and he saw that his face was hard. A square, ugly jaw, sullen eyes, unrelaxed mouth.

Standing on the porch now, in front of Carlin, the lieutenant saluted. Carlin never raised his hand.

"I'm Lieutenant Hoyt, sir, reporting for duty."

Carlin didn't shake hands as he should have. He didn't smile as he might have. He said harshly:

"You're the bird wanted active duty, eh?"

The words were mocking, snarling.

Hoyt was so taken aback he said nothing. The hand he had extended dropped to his side.

"Damn you," Carlin said, "I'll teach you to come up here to my company trying to make trouble."

A queer, sinking feeling came into the pit of the lieutenant's stomach. Here was a madman. The innuendoes at Kiethly came back to him. Faint memories of tales he had heard of Carlin. A sudden tenseness came over him. He felt the way he had at times when a *barong* attack was pounding toward him, the sickening feeling that maybe this time his pistol would jam.

"I didn't come to make any trouble, Captain Carlin."

"Don't talk back to me! Another word out of you and I'll prefer charges against you!"

A Filipino *muchacho* crept through the door of the house on to the porch. He stood, shrinking, looking up at Carlin.

"Chow ready, sir—"

Carlin whirled on him and struck him across his face with an open hand.

"Damn you! What did I tell you about saying that?"

The boy picked himself up from the bamboo floor. He was shaking with fright.

"Dinner is served, señor," he said in a faint, sing-song voice.

"That's better— Now, Mr. Hoyt, I'll give you ten minutes to change. Vicente, show the lieutenant to his quarters. Tell the cook to hold dinner."

The boy, glad of escape, scuttled through the door. A soldier appeared on the path with Hoyt's footlocker over his shoulder.

"Take it around to the back," Carlin snapped at the soldier. "What in hell do you mean by coming up here?"

He turned to Hoyt, who hesitated by the open door.

"Mr. Hoyt, you are to dress, you understand."

Ugly resentment was burning in Hoyt.

"I brought my field equipment only, Captain," he said quietly. He looked Carlin steadily in the eyes.

Carlin said, his hard jaw working as though struggling to control himself:

"I regulate the uniform worn up here. You understand?"

Hoyt said nothing. Carlin's cold eyes bored into him.

"Tomorrow," he said, "I'll send word in with the escort. See that they have instructions to send the rest of your wardrobe."

"Yes, sir."

Hoyt wanted to be gone, but Carlin held him with his fierce eyes. He said:

"Don't get the idea, Mr. Hoyt, because you're in a one-company station that you can go about slack. You're an officer and supposed to be a gentleman. I'm going to enter on your efficiency report that

you reported here improperly equipped."

"Yes, sir."

Hoyt was boiling with rage as he turned and followed the houseboy into the *sala*. In spite of the blaze his mind was in he could not help but notice the room. He paused halfway across the floor of the spacious living room and stared about him in wonder. The place was amazing; it would have been if the house had been a mansion on the Estado Major in Manila.

Priceless *patates* intricately woven covered the burnished *camagon* floor—a floor actually of hewn ebony logs. The inner walls, though of *swali*, or woven bamboo, were laced by a master craftsman. They were hung with Indian tapestries and magnificent elephant cloths, glittering with hundreds of polished bits of mirror glass. Narra, ebony and teakwood chairs and tables fit for a palace of the sultan gave the place a startling air of sophistication. Silver *buya* boxes, great polished brass trays, gleaming chow pots, gave a subdued richness to the room. Most startling of all was the baby grand piano angled across one corner of the room. It must have taken a platoon of *cargadores* to drag that thing over the mountains and through the jungle from Kiethly.

There were two bedrooms which filled the rest of the house back of the *sala*. The door to Carlin's was shut. Vicente led Hoyt into the empty one. It was clean, square and solid. A quartermaster cot, made up, a washstand and a bucket were in the room. Hoyt looked about him curiously.

HOYT washed, dressed in a clean khaki uniform, and with a sick feeling still in the pit of his stomach, presented himself to Carlin at table. The captain sat down and motioned for Hoyt to seat himself in the other chair. He reached for a silver cocktail shaker that gleamed in the dull light from the oil lamp swinging overhead. He poured the martini into delicate, gold rimmed glasses. He smiled.

"The ice you brought up today is damned welcome," he said.

The pleasantness of his voice startled Hoyt. Good Lord, was this the man who had snarled at him a few minutes back?

"You're not drinking," Carlin said.

Hoyt was aware of dim figures moving quietly at the other end of the porch. Beyond the penumbra of the lamplight he saw that a group of soldiers were softly shifting camp stools, whispering in low voices. Carlin noted his curious look. He smiled.

"My orchestra," he said. "At first they were bad, very bad. I tried out every man in the company before I got this lot together. And even these took a long training. Had most of them on bread and water before I eliminated flat notes. Listen—"

He held up his hand. A dreamy look came into his eyes.

" 'Fifth Nocturne'," he murmured.

Hoyt listened, spellbound, as the low, sweet music rose, swelling and subsiding on the thin mountain air. In the midst of the music a loud shout echoed from inside the stockade walls. A curse carried to them, tearing the concord of the music.

"*Para!*"

Carlin held up an imperious hand to the musicians. The music stopped with the suddenness of a miracle.

"Sergeant!"

A dim figure arose from among the players. A grizzled old soldier approached into the bright circle of light. He held a violin clutched against his chest.

Carlin looked at him, his eyes cold with fury.

"Sergeant," he said distinctly, "put those men in solitary. Don't come back and tell me that they can't be found. If you don't get the ones who made that noise, tell the first sergeant I'll have his stripes! *Sigue!*"

Hoyt looked at the man who had given these fantastic orders. Putting soldiers, fighting men of his own company, into solitary confinement because they had

innocently shouted while his music was playing! Mutiny would be breeding here . . .

When the sergeant-musician came back, Carlin said nothing to him. He knew that his orders had been carried out. The music went on. Carlin said nothing, just drank steadily with his dinner, nodding his handsome head, listening with a faraway look in his eyes.

Hoyt marveled at the dinner. Venison, salad and excellent mangoes. Later, Vicente brought in champagne. But he had no taste for food.

"Always have it when ice comes through," Carlin said.

Hoyt said nothing. Carlin looked at him sharply.

"What's the matter? You're not eating. You've had a long march."

Hoyt met Carlin's hard blue eyes squarely.

"Captain Carlin—"

Carlin leaned toward the younger man. His eyes narrowed slightly so that a faint line appeared between his eyebrows.

"Yes?" he said softly.

Hoyt had to say what was tearing at him inside. To hell with this madman. Let him prefer charges. How would he prove them?

"Captain Carlin—" He looked hard into Carlin's eyes now, because he wanted him to know before he started the words, that he had reached the limit of his endurance.

"Yes?" Carlin again said. Softer this time.

"You said a short time ago that I was an officer and supposed to be—a gentleman?"

"Yes," Carlin said.

"I expect to be treated as both—I intend to be," Hoyt said.

There was a dead silence, while their eyes clung, hating each other. In the lieutenant's there was sharp, irrevocable defiance. In the eyes of the older man was simply a cold, implacable hate.

Then Carlin smiled.

"Aren't you being treated like a gentleman, Mr. Hoyt?"

"Right now—yes."

Carlin sat back, a grim smile playing about his harsh mouth. A handsome devil, Hoyt thought, as he hated him.

"You'll understand—in the *short* time you will know me—Mr. Hoyt, that I make a clean cut distinction between the two attitudes. Off duty—while you are with me—you will be treated by me as a gentleman. Unless you prove to be otherwise."

"Look here—!"

Carlin held up a rigid hand.

"Please don't interrupt me. As I said, you will be treated as a gentleman while you are in this house. Also, you will come to learn, when on duty outside, you will be treated as an officer—a junior officer, Mr. Hoyt."

There was still a little of the boy left in Hoyt in spite of the harsh life he had led. He felt now a growing lump in his throat, a welling up of a great loneliness. He was a good soldier. His record had always been clean. He felt a premonition that Carlin would hit there. He didn't care how he was treated off duty; his great fear was that Carlin would strike, rather, at his professional pride. That he could not stand.

He said, with a burst of desperation:

"You'll find I know my job, sir. I've had service in—"

Carlin stopped him sharply.

"Mr. Hoyt! You will please never mention one word of official moment while in my house. Do you understand me? If you have anything of that nature to say to me, come to the orderly room. I never intend to mention this to you again."

Hoyt rose unsteadily from the table. He could not trust himself to remain another minute.

"Good night," he said, and before Carlin could say a word he was gone.

Later that night he awoke from a fitful sleep. Softly, as though it were the music of a dream, he heard the rippling notes of a piano. At first he thought it was a dream. Then he remembered Carlin, with his hard eyes, and the baby grand piano that it must have taken a platoon

of men to drag through the jungle trail. A patch of moonlight gleamed silver through the wire netted window by his head. It lay in a sinister square upon the sally port. From outside in the moon drenched, brooding night, came the faint, persistent call of some jungle animal. Hoyt reached back to the headpiece of the bed and felt for the pistol he had hung there.

He dropped off into a drug-like sleep, the soft notes of Carlin's music pursuing him.

CARLIN was gone when Hoyt appeared for breakfast. The sun was just tipping the edge of the surrounding jungle, but Hoyt had a guilty feeling that he was late. No list of calls had been given him. But surely no drills would be scheduled before daybreak. A monotonous chanting sound rose and fell from the direction of the barracks.

"What's that?" Hoyt said to Vicente, who was waiting on him.

The Filipino boy's eyes met those of the lieutenant significantly.

"Scout can do phys'cal drill—'Butt's Manual', señor."

Hoyt started, pushed away from the table, reached for his pistol belt. Lord, it would never do to let this fanatic get something on him so soon. "Late for drill" was a more serious thing on an efficiency report than "improperly equipped". The last could be satisfactorily explained.

The drill was over when Hoyt arrived at the little parade behind the stockade. Carlin was entering the orderly room, which was at one end of the barracks in the staked enclosure. Hoyt saluted him briskly. Carlin turned about on the veranda, returned the salute and stared steadily at the lieutenant.

"You were late for drill, Mr. Hoyt. Why?"

Hoyt knew it was useless to explain.

"I overslept, sir," he said.

He said more with his eyes as he stared into Carlin's.

Carlin signed the morning report and several other papers on his desk. Just inside the door the first sergeant stood, rigidly at attention. The clerk sat in a chair across the desk from the captain, swiftly blotting Carlin's signature, whipping the finished papers away into a wire basket.

"Looks like a wall scaling contest," Hoyt thought gloomily. "Why in hell can't he tell the top to stand at ease?"

As the papers were signed, Hoyt, who was standing uncomfortably by, not knowing what to do with himself, sensed that both the first sergeant and the company clerk were furtively studying him. He wondered what was going on in those shrewd native brains. Were they pitying him? Or were they looking to him to smash this egotistical bubble who must make their lives a very hell?

At morning drill Carlin drove them like slaves. Hoyt was used to the odd manner of the old Scout captains. Already he had been under some prime martinets. But this Carlin!

Hoyt had stepped in front of the first platoon, as was proper according to drill regulation. Carlin called him for it.

"It's my place—my platoon," he said sullenly.

"*Your* platoon! You haven't any platoon, Mr. Hoyt. Get back there in the file closers until I assign you. Chances are, you don't even know your drill. Never saw a lieutenant yet that did."

Hoyt, his face burning with the ignominy of this insult before the men, took his place behind the line. Under the blazing sun, hour after hour, the company marched and counter-marched at the sharp commands of Carlin. Close and extended order drill.

"Double time! . . To the rear, march! . . As skirmishers! . . Get that man up on the line, Sergeant! . . Ten days' grass cutting! . . By squads—rush! . . Get your heads down there! . . Sergeant, crack them down with your rifle butt!"

Over and over the same commands. The sweat pouring down their brown faces, their olive drab shirts black on their wet bodies, heartlessly Carlin drove

them. He was indefatigable, everywhere at once enforcing his mad demands for speed and precision. Few halts, no rests. This was insane, Hoyt said to himself.

Carlin called a halt.

"Take the company, Mr. Hoyt!" He sheathed his saber and stood staring impatiently at the lieutenant. "Damn it, *move!*"

Hoyt, worn and bitter with the hazing he had received, stumbled out his first command.

"Put some snap in it! What in hell you trying to do, ruin my company?"

Carlin hounded him as he moved the company from place to place and changed its formations. The nagging bewildered Hoyt. Under hostile fire he could have gone through the drill book without a single error. But not with Carlin lashing him this way. He had the wild desire to hurl his saber from him, to sit down squarely on the parade ground. To sit and look up into Carlin's face and laugh, and then leisurely to curse him. He wondered that the men could stand it. Some of them, indeed, seemed shaken, tottering. But most of them still moved with the precision of tough machines.

At eleven o'clock recall blew. Five hours straight drill with only the momentary rests the short halts allowed.

Carlin moved away toward his quarters, ignoring Hoyt. The lieutenant walked toward the orderly room. He wanted a list of calls. He was determined that whatever else happened, Carlin would get nothing more on him officially. The clerk handed him two typewritten letters. Hoyt read them, dazed. The first one said:

> You will explain by indorsement hereon why you failed to report for duty at Camp Buldong, Mind., improperly equipped.

The second:

> You will explain by indorsement hereon why you were late for physical drill this date.

Hoyt strangled a curse. No need to let these soldiers hear what he thought of his captain. This, then, was to be the game. Day by day minor peccadillos, such as any man not perfect would be sure to make, were to be recorded on paper against him. The coward's way in the Army. And his reappointment time was nearly due. His four years almost expired. The next efficiency report he received, if unsatisfactory, would outweigh the three good ones now at battalion headquarters. That was also the perverse way of the Army. And Carlin knew it. Meant to drive him out. Make his life in this lonely camp a living hell.

JIM HOYT had had a tough time from life. Enlisted at seventeen, he had fought his way upward by studying nights in the barracks. Under dim oil lamps on the border, by candlelight in tents while other men were boozing and wenching he was struggling, in spite of their good natured laughs, toward something that he thought better. Officers had helped him. Got him old Scout exams. Worked the problems for him, lent him books. . . And so far in the Army, Hoyt had found that, do your job, and every officer over you was for you.

But Carlin. . .

Hoyt faced the clerk, who was watching him curiously.

"I write indorsement, *Teniente?*" the soldier inquired respectfully.

"You write this letter—three copies."

The man stared at him. The first sergeant came in, softly. He also stared at the big lieutenant, who looked as though some one had just struck him across his bronzed face.

"Get a pencil— Ready?"

"*Listo, señor.*"

Hoyt dictated, the words coming out in short bursts as from a machine gun:

"To commanding officer, 16th Battalion, Philippine Scouts. Subject: Disregard of Army Regulations. Undersigned respectfully reports that on the 20th December, 19— in violation of Army Regulations, Captain Hugh Carlin, P. S, did refuse to allow undersigned, to assume his proper command, viz: first platoon of 61st Company, P. S, at drill on that date as is provided for in Regula-

tions. And that on above date undersigned was subjected to humiliation and reprimanded before enlisted men of said command in a manner expressly forbidden by Army Regulations. . ."

The clerk wrote impassively. The old first sergeant, listening, moved uneasily about the room. Never in all his service had he taken issue with an officer. But now—

"*Teniente*—"

Hoyt scowled at him.

"Bad business, *Teniente.*"

Hoyt said to the clerk, disregarding the old sergeant—

"Put a copy of that on the captain's desk, and send one down to Kiethly with the next mail."

The old man shook his head, muttering. The clerk started to type, casting furtive glances at the lieutenant. He was smart, and so he was a clerk. What harm to type this crazy thing? It would please this mad lieutenant and it would do no harm because *el capitan* would never let it get out of the post.

Hoyt was in a black mood when he joined Carlin at lunch. He made it a point to be exactly on time. He barely had time to wash up. Carlin was sitting in the cool *sala* drinking beer when he came in from the barracks. Carlin had smiled pleasantly and nodded. Hoyt ignored him. If official relations ceased when off duty, he'd show Carlin what he thought of him as a man.

Hoyt still wore his olive drab shirt when he came to table. He had done it in every garrison mess he had been in.

Carlin looked up from where he sat at table. He scowled at the lieutenant.

"You will please change into a blouse, Mr. Hoyt," he said coldly.

Hoyt stared down at him, not moving.

"Last night, sir," he said steadily, "you stated that you made a distinction between the amenities existing between gentlemen and the relations between a commanding officer and a subordinate while on duty—"

Carlin's eyes were bleak.

"Between gentlemen, yes. I suspect, Mr. Hoyt, that you are not a gentleman."

Hoyt, in his recollections of Carlin, remembered that he had graduated from a famous Eastern university. The instincts of the soldier of fortune or perhaps some folly or disappointment had sent him into this foreign legion. Nobody asked about those things in the Scouts.

Hoyt flushed. Always a little sensitive for having come up from the ranks, this innuendo from Carlin made a definite issue. He leaned toward Carlin.

"I know what you mean. I doubt if you'd have had the guts to make it from the ranks, Carlin!"

The use of his captain's name without title and the tone, made the younger man's words doubly insulting. Carlin's hands, spread before him on the white cloth, clenched. He said, slowly:

"As a matter of fact, Mr. Hoyt, I was a first sergeant of Cavalry when I was commissioned." He paused and kept looking steadily at Hoyt. "And furthermore, I've seen gentlemen from the ranks —but never at table in shirt sleeves. The kitchen is the place for that."

"Then," Hoyt said quietly, "I will take my meals in the kitchen."

He turned away, his hands working against his sides. He was just able to keep those great bony fists from Carlin.

Carlin held him in his tracks with his whiplash voice.

"Mr. Hoyt!"

Hoyt faced him, his eyes blazing with passion.

Carlin said:

"I am going to break a rule. I am going to give you a direct order in my house. You will not move to the barracks; you will not take your meals in any place except at my table."

"You can't give such an order. I am an officer. I have the right of private quarters. I have the right to ration myself. I pay for my food, do I not?"

"As commanding officer of this post, I direct you to remain in this house and to mess at my table. The exigencies of the present situation up here give me that authority. An emergency exists as far as

this command is concerned. We are in a state of war."

Hoyt knew that he was right. The man had him. He saluted.

"Very well, sir."

A grim smile played about Carlin's thin lips. As Hoyt sat down, he said quietly—

"Please do not salute in quarters, Mr. Hoyt."

THEY finished the meal without a word—a word, that is, from Hoyt. Carlin talked pleasantly. He asked Hoyt what books he had brought, what shows he had seen in Manila. Hoyt replied not a word. He felt, sitting there, his jaw grinding grimly on his tasteless food, much like a schoolboy sulking. He hated Carlin because he realized how childish he himself must seem. How ridiculous. It might be, if he played Carlin's game, talked pleasantly, laughed, acted his old, buoyant self, that in the end Carlin would relent. Find him a gay companion in this lonely place. And finally change his official attitude. But—to hell with him!

They walked together to the orderly room in silence. Then Carlin said:

"I always take a siesta in the afternoon. You'll carry out the fatigue work and report to me at recall. Remember you're in hostile country. One platoon with full belts and rifles. Is that clear?"

"Yes, sir."

"I'll inspect the job," Carlin said, looking fixedly at him, "and it had better be done right. That's all."

Hoyt was amazed at the task set for the four hours before recall. A mass of small growth that obscured the field of fire from the stockade had to be cut away. And only two-thirds of the company available for the job. He was more amazed at the briskness with which the little brown soldiers went at it with their *bolos* and axes. It was as though they had slept all morning and now, fresh and eager, were competing in a field day with a rival company.

At dinner that night the two again faced each other. Hoyt refused a cocktail. When Carlin pushed the whisky bottle toward him he shook his head. Carlin smiled.

"It's good for you in these high altitudes," he said. "Keeps your blood thick."

Hoyt said nothing. Carlin seemed to be in an especially good humor. He had sent the orchestra away and ordered one of them to play an elaborate phonograph that stood in the *sala*. The music was well selected; haunting, it seemed to Hoyt. The last sort of music any one would associate with such a brute as Carlin. In fact, you would not think of any music in connection with the man.

Hoyt, sunk in gloom, silent, pitied himself morosely. Sitting at this well set table, with all the amenities and comforts of civilization about him, the irony of it gripped him. In spite of the pitiless jungle, with its constant threat closed in about him, what a life it would be with a genial companion. Almost any other captain in the Scouts, even the most bitter that he had known, would have seemed a boon companion to him now. His last captain—tough, genial, soldierly Costello—what a grand time they could have here! Out there, the gloom of the wilderness, and nearer, the tinkle of guitars and the contented talk of the men. He liked to hear the men, off duty in the barracks. It was a homely, friendly sound.

He was aware that Carlin's flow of talk had stopped. He was peering out over the porch rail, a quick, alert look in his face.

"Did you hear something?"

Hoyt's wandering mind came back. He was surprised out of his bitterness.

"No, sir—nothing."

Carlin rose slowly from the table, mechanically folding his napkin carefully by the side of his plate. His eyes were uneasy as he stared out into the night.

"Something's wrong," he said.

Now Hoyt could hear running feet, voices calling in the barracks.

"Corporal of the guard!"

The cry rang out in eery, quavering tones—alarmed tones in an alien tongue.

Carlin had already grabbed his pistol belt, which always hung on a chair beside him at meals, and was racing toward the barracks. Hoyt sprang after him, wild tumult in his heart.

The small postern in the main gate was open, a dim lantern in the hands of a soldier throwing a weird light on the ground in front. A little group of soldiers in all stages of undress stood about the prone figure of a man. Hoyt recognized the first sergeant, Villaneuva, and the sentry on No. 1, whose fixed bayonet gleamed orange in the wavering light.

The man drew away as the captain came up.

"Get back there, inside!" a corporal said in the dialect to the men crowding the little door.

The first sergeant saluted Carlin. He pointed at the man on the ground. It was a Scout soldier, his clothes ripped half off his body, blood plastered.

"Platoon 60 Company," Villaneuva said.

Hoyt knew he meant that the man belonged to the platoon that had escorted him up from Kiethly and that had marched back early this same morning.

"Maybe the bird who was to get my mess jacket," he thought bitterly. Hoyt knew instantly what this meant.

The little platoon of brown men, happily marching back to Kiethly, had been cut to pieces somewhere in those hills.

Carlin bent down and touched the man with his hand.

"Cold," he said. He looked sharply at the first sergeant.

"Say anything?"

"He say many Moro by Paduan Paso, *Capitan.* Kill all others."

The pass called Paduan, Hoyt remembered, was almost halfway back to the post. Carlin stood staring at the dead soldier at his feet. Hoyt watched his face curiously in the faint light of the lantern. There was no sorrow, or tenderness, there, for the little man who had, by heaven knew what heroism, fought his way back over those dangerous miles to warn the garrison that death was again afoot. Nothing but brooding, cold, and estimating.

"Pinio?"

"*Sí, señor*—Pinio."

Carlin cursed softly.

HOYT knew that this was an affair for Kiethly. They had the men for a proper sized punitive expedition. One company, sallying out into those trackless hills, would stand little chance against the horde of killers the ruthless Dato Pinio would by this time have on the rampage. By now the wily *dato* would be down on the plains, burning, ravaging, destroying. By tomorrow, back in the jungles of his hills.

Hoyt was dazed at Carlin's orders.

"Turn the company out, full pack. *Sigue*, now!"

The sergeant saluted, whipped out his whistle and blew a sharp blast on it. A wild shout went up from within the stockade. Already the eyes of those little warriors were agleam with the lust of battle. They knew what that whistle in the night meant.

"First platoon remains here to protect the camp," Carlin said in his cold, expressionless voice.

What was that? Hoyt took a step toward Carlin.

"You're not leaving me here, sir?"

There was a cold savagery in the tone. Carlin looked at him, a mocking smile on his face.

"I hope you can handle the job," he said.

The enlisted men had gone back into the stockade. They had taken the body of the dead soldier with them.

"Damn your soul!" Hoyt said softly.

They were standing there alone in the dark. Nothing but the light of the cold stars to show them the sparks of hate in each other's eyes.

Carlin said softly—

"On second thought, I'm going to put you in arrest."

Hoyt was facing Carlin, his back to the little postern door in the gate. The gate

creaked a little. He was conscious of a murmur of voices. But now he was mad with ugliness. Nothing mattered but the vicious outlines of that hated face before him. He had never heard a word said against Carlin's ability as a soldier. If anything, what dim things had come to his mind that had been said about the man had all been highly creditable. But wild, unreasoning anger had him by the throat. He sensed that this Carlin, this vile egoist, must, above all, fancy himself in the rôle he had chosen for himself. He said, and his voice rose high with exultant mockery:

"Whoever told you *you* were a soldier! You poor damned fool, not even a wet-eared shavetail would lead a handful of men out of a stockade when Pinio was loose. You ought to be court-martialed for ordering men out like this!"

Carlin said, with deadly coldness—

"*You* are going to be court-martialed!"

He raised his voice.

"Sergeant Villaneuva!"

From the door behind Hoyt came the sharp sound of the first sergeant's voice.

"Here, *Capitan!*"

"Who's with you?"

"Sergeant Gruspe, señor. He like know we take—"

"You hear what the *teniente* just said? Don't lie now, or I'll have your stripes!"

The sergeant's voice came slowly, brokenly, mournfully.

"I hear, *Capitan!*"

Carlin laughed hoarsely.

"You stuck your neck right in the noose, my friend. When this show's over you go down to Kiethly under guard. Insubordination in the face of the enemy won't keep a court closed five minutes."

Hoyt laughed in his face.

"Listen, you amateur soldier, you! I've been fighting these hill Moros before you ever heard of them. Put me in arrest. Leave me here. I'll sit up there behind those walls and drink good Scotch and laugh while your bloody soul is on its way to hell. I'll be in command when this show is over and the buzzards will be picking your bones at Paduan Pass. You think you can stop them there, hold 'em while Kiethly gets 'em in the back! That's a big laugh, Carlin! I've been up against Pinio before. He'll slip around you in places you never heard of, be at your back. You and every man with you will be slashed to ribbons with his *krises* before another sun sets. Where will your witnesses be then?"

Carlin said softly.

"You won't be here drinking Scotch. You'll march out with me, unarmed, at the rear of the column. You'll go through what the rest of us goes through, only you won't have a command. You'll be lower than the newest buck private. If I get it, you get it. But if we both come out alive—" Hoyt could almost see the gloating in Carlin's eyes as he leaned forward to fling the words into his face—"why, then, Mr. Hoyt, I'll march you down to headquarters myself, and hand you over to the commanding officer personally for trial."

Hoyt knew that he was beaten. With a hundred men at his back, not one of whom owed loyalty to a strange lieutenant, nor cared a whit about a delicate point of discipline between officers, Carlin held an unbeatable hand.

Hoyt cursed himself for having lost his head. If he had kept his mouth shut, Carlin would have marched without him. And Carlin, at the head of two platoons—for Scout officers must physically lead their men in action—wouldn't have had a ghost of a chance of escaping Pinio's countless blades.

The two officers walked into the orderly room as if in response to a silent command. The first sergeant was getting his personal equipment together. He was swearing softly in the little room where he slept, just off the office. The clerk, a sallow, dapper little man, his eyes alight with excitement, pretended he was absorbed in the papers on the desk. He wasn't to go, but he wanted to be soldierly in this crisis. There was an oil lamp swinging from rusted wires overhead. It creaked in the slow breeze that came through the high windows.

"What's that stuff?"

Carlin pointed to the papers under the nervous fingers of the clerk. Silently the corporal handed him the copy of Hoyt's complaint. Carlin read it, his face impassive. He tossed it on the desk. A flutter of wind swept it to the floor. The clerk bent to pick it up.

"Leave it there," Carlin said. A faint, grim smile moved his mouth. There was a mocking gleam in his eyes.

"That would be a frivolous anticlimax now, Mr. Hoyt," he said.

From outside in the barracks came the low, steady hum of a hundred men, belting and arming themselves for battle.

A SUDDEN sense of faint lighting like the first, tentative spots on a darkened stage. The jungle was hushed. A cool, new wind blew up from the sea. The higher ground, that made the ridge gapped by Paduan Pass, got the new light first. The men could see one another's faces. White, almost, those flat-brown faces looked in the strange, thin light of the coming day.

Below them, to the east, were smaller hills; hummocks backed by dark splotches of jungle. The trail from the pass wound away from them, darting in and out of the dark clumps of trees and vines, finally to be lost in the heavy belt of true jungle between them and the only other white men within five hundred miles.

Carlin lay in a thicket, his arms across a flat rock. He held his glasses to his eyes, searching the trail before him. On both sides of him, a platoon to right and left, lay his men. Stretched in skirmish line, each had dug before him an inconspicuous bit of parapet and had covered the top craftily with grass or vines plucked from nearby. In the campaign hat of each was a wreath of grass. Potential heroes, each with his crown of bay. . .

Beside Carlin Hoyt lay flat on his stomach, his glasses sheathed in their leather case. He stared down the slope, his eyes somber, his thoughts dead. What did he care now? Stupidly pounding at the back of his brain was one dull, inescapable thought. At first, when a flash of memory had brought it to him, he had been exultant. He had reveled in his secret knowledge all night as they had marched. The humiliation of his own position on that march, unarmed, without command and plodding at the rear of the column like the lowest *cargador*, made of that thought a glowing brand of revenge.

Some years before, when a second lieutenant, Hoyt had been sent up from Overton with an engineer detachment to map this very country. Pinio had not been heard of in those days and the country was quiet. Hoyt had discovered then that Paduan was not the only trail that led through the thickness of the jungle, or over this abrupt mountain ridge. Some two miles to the south was another, fainter, trail obscured by growths, but a perfect path for a flanking movement. Pinio's men would be sure to know of it. And Carlin, who was sitting here, secure in the thought that Pinio must drive his captured cattle through Paduan, was asking for his own death warrant. Hoyt had been recalled before his map of the district had been finished, and the work had never been renewed. And he had made certain before marching, by an inspection of the map on the orderly room wall, that no additions had been made on Carlin's incomplete map.

Hoyt felt restless, waiting here beside Carlin. His eyes strayed to the little soldiers as they lay darting alert glances down the trail below them. He knew what was going on in their simple minds. He could almost put their thoughts into words. Many times before he had studied their intent faces as they watched for the coming of the hated Moro, or awaited the word for attack. It fascinated him to watch them. They reminded him of the pulsating little fighting cocks you saw in the *galleras* on Sundays as they twitched in the hands of their masters who affixed the gleaming steel spurs to their legs.

He felt sorry for these little soldiers.

But he hated Carlin more, now, than he loved them. Even if Carlin knew of the other pass, he could not hope to save his command from Pinio. He could put up a better fight, that's all. Seventy men against a thousand. And the tribesmen would be well armed and have the added incentive of saving their plundered cattle and women. The Moro fought viciously in such a case, Hoyt well knew.

Carlin said:

"I think I see dust—a good five miles—where the trail widens near the river. That'll be the herd. They ought to be on us now, any minute. They'll hold the cattle back out of range until they make it through the pass. Of course, they know we're here. They always do."

"Yes," Hoyt said, "they always do." And as though to drown the deafening beat of his conscience by adding to his hate for Carlin, he added, "You mean to leave me here—defenseless before a *barong* rush?" Carlin lowered his glasses to the rock. He turned slightly and grinned at Hoyt.

"And have you shoot me in the back?"

"You think I would?" Hoyt said, staring back at Carlin.

"I know damned well you would," Carlin said.

A sort of horror came over Hoyt. Suddenly Carlin had given a new twist to his hateful thoughts. A man who could believe that of him deserved to be shot in the back.

"It's a wonder some of your own men haven't done it—before."

Carlin grinned.

"They don't think it would take, for one thing," he said. "They don't think bullets will kill me. They've seen every man within a hundred yards of me cut down and seen me stand there and laugh."

Hoyt remembered now the story he had heard over club tables about Bud Butu. Yes, that had happened to Carlin there. He looked at the man with a new feeling: a hateful, unwanted respect. A man who could do what Carlin had done at Butu must have something about him that could be appealed to.

"Captain Carlin?"

Carlin had raised his glasses. But now he set them back, carefully, and looked at his lieutenant.

"Yes," he said, looking at the other curiously.

"A man who has done the decent things you have done must have some spark of humanity in him. I remember now about that fight at Bud Butu. I hadn't connected you with it before. If you don't mind, I'll take back what I said about your—soldiering."

"Just a lieutenant sounding off," Carlin said. "It just made me laugh."

Carlin's voice had softened a little. Hoyt, watching him closely, was suddenly aware that the man was strangely mollified. He had the weakness, then, of vanity. Like all other men that way.

"Pretty soon," Hoyt said, "we'll be in a tough spot. There's not much chance of either of us coming out of this, Carlin. I'd like to ask you one question."

"Yes?" Carlin said.

The lieutenant hesitated. Now that he had to put the thing into words, it seemed almost childish.

"Yes?" Carlin said.

"It's just this. Every lieutenant that you have had has been ruined. You must know my record—it's been clean. And if I do say it myself, I've stood the gaff in this tough soldiering as well as the next man. What's the answer?"

Carlin's eyes strayed toward the jungle below. The dust over the trees was now clear in the breaking day. Hoyt shivered with the cold. Old Villaneuva, who lay close by Carlin, said in a low voice—

"Moro come now pretty soon—got carabao."

CARLIN twisted his body until he faced Hoyt. The lieutenant was stunned by the sudden change that had come over his face. Usually firm and fixed in its expressions, it was now working as though the man were writhing with some barely controlled passion. The blood had surged into it, and Hoyt saw that the sleepless

night had left lines, deep and significant about the eyes and mouth.

Carlin said:

"The first lieutenant I ever had I taught to soldier as I would have my own son. He rewarded me by running off with my wife."

His eyes had again become cold. He stared steadily at Hoyt.

"Does that answer it?"

"No," Hoyt said.

There was a long silence. Carlin fumbled with his glasses. His eyes looked toward the slope below, but Hoyt could see that they were unfocused.

Hoyt said:

"That's happened to many other men. It can be laughed off."

"Not by men like me."

"What did you do to him?" Hoyt asked curiously.

Carlin turned. A fiendish grin came over his face.

"What would you do to me if I gave you a pistol," Carlin said.

Hoyt shuddered. He drew away from Carlin.

Carlin said:

"He lost his nerve at Bud Butu. Skulked in a *bijucca* thicket and left his platoon to the sergeant. It was my duty to do it; but under the circumstances it was a pleasure."

"So you take it out on innocent men?" Hoyt said.

"Yes," Carlin said. "And, so far, circumstances have proved me right. Every lieutenant I've had has been a rotter or a coward. Take Gurney; I caught him faking a target report. Made him put his resignation in. Caperton; swilling booze, even in the morning. Went to drill with it in his canteen. I put him in solitary and laughed at him when he pleaded through the bars for a swig of *vino*. One night he broke out, grabbed a pony and beat it back to the nearest bar. That happened to be Kiethly and friend Pinio was skylarking at the time. I expect you heard of his end."

"And—I? You started on me, Carlin, before I made a false move."

"Listen," Carlin said. "If you could have stood the gaff you say you're so good at, you'd have had your break. After what I've seen of lieutenants, I'm skeptical of all of them. Anybody can pull along if he's patted on the back. Actually, I was getting lonely up there. I was beginning to feel that maybe, after all, about lots of things I'd been wrong. I half liked you, Mr. Hoyt, at first sight. But I wasn't going to let myself in for any more mistakes. After all, when you have to live in the same house with the only other white man for miles, he has to be *right*. Well, you showed me what you were made of."

Passion tore at Hoyt.

"Damn you, you drove me to it!"

Carlin laughed in his face.

"Tell that to the court," he said.

"There'll be no court," Hoyt said, sneering.

Scattered shots rang out from below.

"Advance posts see him now," Villaneuva said.

"No?" Carlin said mockingly.

Hoyt pointed to the front. The firing had become sharper now.

"Pass the word again; not a shot from the line until the whistle," Carlin said quietly to Villaneuva."

"No," Hoyt said. "You haven't got a damned bit better chance than those poor devils you've put out in front. Pinio'll have five hundred *kris* men on top of us in no time now."

Carlin laughed.

"I thought you were a soldier," he said. "You don't think that I'm lying here with this handful of men with the idea that I can stop Pinio single handed, do you?"

"It looks like it," Hoyt said bitterly.

"That cloud of dust he change—go to right," Villaneuva said.

Carlin laughed again.

"Listen," he said. "Last night before we started, I sent out three separate patrols of two men each. Men that can run and know the jungle. At least one of that lot got to Kiethly two hours ago. Nine hours to do twenty miles—a cinch.

All we've got to do is hang on here until the major gets up behind them. They'll never think of it. And if we can't hold this pass on the passive defensive for an hour or two, then we don't deserve to be called Scouts. Look at that field of fire!"

Hoyt looked. And from what he knew of the Scouts they were going to account for a good many Moros before they scaled that smooth slope or forced that narrow pass. A new horror came to him. These men he thought doomed in a forlorn hope, now had a chance. Not only for their lives but for a smashing victory. And that cloud of dust, moving steadily to the south . . . The wily Pinio even now was moving his spoils toward the secret pass. With them he would send a cloud of fighting men. Once the transport was through the pass and safely away, these protectors would swing in on the Scout company's rear, while the main body of the Moros would storm the front. It was clear then that no serious attack would take place at Paduan until this flanking force had had time to get well through the other pass.

What Hoyt had almost done, simply because his hate for this ruthless Carlin blinded him to his first duty as a soldier!

In breathless words he told Carlin, not sparing himself. But Carlin only laughed.

"So you're a dirty coward, too," he said. "Well, you can't trick me with any such cock and bull yarn as that. I'll admit I haven't been all over these hills; but just the same, Mr. Hoyt, I think you're a damn liar."

"I only ask," Hoyt said steadily, "a squad and a couple of automatic rifles. I wouldn't have a chance of coming out of it alive."

Carlin laughed harshly.

"You'd have a grand chance," he said. "You'd pull out the minute you were out of sight and take eight men with you."

Hoyt was desperate. Time was flying. In a little while it would be too late to beat the Moros to the pass.

"Listen," he pleaded. "Don't trust me. Send a sergeant—I'll give him a sketch. All he has to do is follow the ridge south. There're some white rocks there. But it's tough going from here and he'll have to get off at once."

Carlin watched Hoyt's face carefully as he spoke, searching his eyes for some sign of betrayal.

"Damned if I can figure your game. Being a lieutenant, it must be crooked."

"My own chances for pulling through aren't improved by sending men away," Hoyt said with ugly contempt in his voice.

CARLIN talked to Villaneuva in the dialect. Villaneuva said such a pass might be, but he had never heard of it. Carlin directed that he pass the word along the line for a man who might know. Hoyt trembled with impatience as the word flung in gradually diminishing tones from man to man. He had little hope that any of them would be of help. These men were many hundreds of miles from their native province and the 61st Company had been at Buldong less than a year. With such a small command and with the hills teeming with outlaws, they would have done little in the way of moving off the beaten paths.

None of them had ever heard of such a trail.

When the negative word came back, Carlin grinned at Hoyt.

"I guess that settles it," he said.

Desperately Hoyt clutched at Carlin's arm. He pointed off to the right.

"Look! Look at that dust now, Carlin! Where do you think those *carabaos* are bound, then?"

Carlin turned his glasses to where a faint, thin haze hung over the jungle to the south. For a long moment he was silent, as he studied the jungle to the east and south.

"Along the river bed, probably. It's been dry as tinder this year, and there's clearing all along the bank."

"Don't be a damned fool, man!" Hoyt said breathlessly. "Why should they move their convoy off down the river? It would only split them up. Pinio's no dub at this sort of thing. That trail leading

through the other pass comes out by the river about a mile and a half downstream. That's about where those cattle are now."

Carlin continued to stare through his glasses. Below them they could hear taunting yells from the Moro vanguard, trying to excite the Scout advance posts by insult to leave their cover and run into certain death. But the Scouts replied only with a slow and carefully directed fire which kept the tribesmen back in the jungle edge.

Carlin spread his dispatch case and wiped the isinglass cover of his map with a grimy hand. The details of the Army engineer map were plain and correct for about a half mile on either side of the Kiethly trail. The rest was merely a vague outline of ridge and stream, obviously the guess of some optimistic mapper.

The captain looked up from his map finally and stared hard at Hoyt. A bullet smacked against the rock, almost in his face. A thin haze of rock powder dusted them both. Hoyt ducked instinctively. Carlin never moved a muscle of his face. Hoyt hated him for that.

Carlin said quietly:

"I'm damned if I know what your game is. Give me a reasonable excuse why I should detach men as you suggest. Not a military one; the one you gave is sound enough, I'll admit. But a personal one. You see, Mr. Hoyt, I've learned to look for the selfish reason where lieutenants are concerned."

"Put it this way," Hoyt said harshly. "If the thing works out as I say, you owe the safety of your command to me. Troops from Kiethly, or not, if that pass isn't closed, they'll be in our rear, cut us to pieces and be scattered in the hills before Major Chambers can do us much good. You know the cautious reputation he has."

"I told you I was satisfied with the tactical reason," Carlin said sharply. "Damn it, man, don't you suppose I've soldiered long enough to know the effect of surprise fire on a convoy? I'll admit it would give us another hour at least—time for the battalion to come up. I don't need any damned lieutenant to tell me my business. What do you get out of it, that's what I want to know."

"Just this," Hoyt said quietly. "If there's any decency in you—and I suspect it after Bud Butu—you won't prefer charges against a man for insubordination who made it possible to pull off a thing like that. I want to command those men you send back there. The chances are they'll be wiped out. Can you understand, Carlin, a man who would prefer death to dismissal for insubordination in the face of the enemy?"

The younger man's voice had risen. The words choked off in his throat. There were tears of humiliation and bitter self-pity in his eyes.

Carlin said:

"You wanted to save your own lousy hide. And if things turn out as you say it's only because you did what any officer should. As far as that goes, you intended to let us in for it in the beginning. Why didn't you let me know about that place when we marched out? I could have verified it then before it was too late, and if the thing was a hoax, the reconnoitering patrol could have been back here with us before daylight."

Hoyt did not reply to the lashing words.

Villaneuva said softly:

"He come now. Moro come—"

Carlin spoke to him rapidly in Illocano, Villaneuva nodded and passed the word on. Then both men looked over the crest. A loud, eery yell, a swelling roll of sound came up to them from the jungle below.

"*Listo*—steady, men!" Carlin called out in a loud, clear voice.

"Battle sight!" Villaneuva said in a high voice, and he half rose in his excitement. His gleaming eyes swept along the line of men. The Scouts, settling into their rifle slings, cuddled the oily stocks of their rifles against their brown faces. Their eyes steadied, narrowed, as they focused through the open sight and brought the wedge shaped front sight into line.

Non-coms called along the line, warning the men.

SUDDENLY from the edge of the trees, like a flying wedge on a football field, came a packed throng of half naked men. Spears and *krises* flashed in the early rays of the sun. A tremendous burst of fire came from behind them. Bullets shrieked over the Scout line and tore clouds of dust into the very faces of the flattened men. Carlin's whistle screamed above the uproar. A crash of rifle fire answered it, as though it were the signal for one huge gun. Every soldier on that line knew what to aim at. They knew that those half hundred Moros were *juramentados*, forsworn ones. That before they had left the cover of the jungle, Pinio's priest, or *panglima*, had anointed them. They knew that those raving berserkers would not stop until they let infidel blood with their gleaming *krises*. That, or until their glorified souls winged to the Mohammedan heaven.

Hoyt had seen *barong* rushes before. And never had he failed to thrill to them. But never before had he had the leisure completely to enjoy the spectacle. Always he had had the responsibility of command. The fear of flank menace to guard against. And the personal worry of looking out for his own hide when, as often happened, some of the fanatics got through the blast of rifle fire and came to hand-to-hand grips. The odd thing about it was that *juramentados* dropped at your very feet were sometimes found to have carried as many as ten bullets. Something in their supreme faith in Allah seemed to charm them against death. It wasn't enough to hit one. You must smash him between the eyes, blow that tenacious brain from his skull, before he gritted his teeth in a grinning, unconquered death.

Hoyt watched the faces of the men nearest him. This was another luxury he had had little chance before to indulge in, because once the firing started it was his duty to use his glasses on the enemy. The faces pressed against those rifle stocks were as intent, as calm, as though they were hugging rifles aimed at paper targets. Indeed, it seemed to Hoyt that there was more quiet in them than he had seen in many eager to bring up a precarious score that would make expert riflemen and add five pesos to the pittance of the soldier's monthly wage.

The first blast of Scout fire had been devastating. Warned always to aim low in such cases, they had literally swept the legs from the oncoming rush. Even a *juramentado* can not run with a leg nearly torn from him by a Springfield bullet at a hundred yards.

Still screaming, they came on, though more than half of them were down.

"You'd think they would learn to open out," Carlin said with quiet disgust. "If they'd take decent intervals, half of them would be on our necks."

The charging Moros were now lunging to the ground in almost cadenced time. It was obvious that none would make to the crest. The Moros who should be covering them with fire from the trees below were more concerned with watching the drama of their fellows' rush than with their duty of protection. Allah's will would be done, whether they fired or not. And their supreme sense of drama, their love for the bizarre, gave them rather the sense of spectators, cheering fans, egging their chosen ones on.

The Scouts, oblivious now of cover, were uttering wild cries of derision and delight. They screamed out, naming certain spectacular Moros with apt paraphrase.

"Watch me get *Colorado!* Santos, *bobo*, take *Sucio*," or," *Cuidado El Feo*—look at the Ugly! He's my meat!"

"They're having lots of fun," Carlin said, and he blew his whistle. The firing ceased reluctantly. Carlin cursed a soldier near him, who, so intent on the last remaining Moro, was still aiming his hot piece. Carlin hurled a rock at the man, rose, and drew his pistol.

"Watch me get that pig," Carlin said.

Hoyt had noticed the man, evidently

the leader of the rush. Half naked like the rest, yet what clothes he had were of a finer texture and color. On his head was a narrow *tubo* of clean green silk. That meant that he had made the holy pilgrimage to Mecca. He was young, and the muscles of his beautifully proportioned body gleamed as they worked under the smooth brown skin. His even white teeth were exposed in an exultant grin. He held a great blade high over his head, its red war tassels streaming across his shoulder.

"Don't fire, men, I want a little pistol practise."

A laughing cheer went up from the men. The Moro fire had ceased. Hoyt understood that, to the watching tribesmen, here was a test case. Their favorite was going to prove now that the rice throwing and anointing of the *panglima* was to be justified.

Hoyt felt a little sick as he knelt there watching this brave, beautiful animal come on. It seemed to him almost as though a foul crime against nature was about to be committed.

The young chief raced on, chanting, his eyes alight with a holy flame of martyrdom. Behind him his people watched. Single handed, he was going into the pig eaters' midst to kill and avenge for Allah, before that bright heaven of houris and sun drenched lakes would open to him.

Carlin fired.

The young chief shook a little, but came on.

Carlin held his heavy automatic farther away from him, steadied it. Carefully he pulled the trigger. The gun fired and jammed.

"Damn the thing!" Carlin said. "That's the trouble with an automatic in this stinking climate."

Calmly he picked out the empty shell which jammed the mechanism. The young Moro was now but twenty-five yards or so away. Villaneuva, standing behind his captain, was holding his own revolver surreptitiously against his side. Carlin cleared the jam and grunted.

"Watch me get him smack between the eyes," he said.

Hoyt watched with a horrible fascination. It was one thing to fire into the brown mass of an enemy that was tearing at you with an even chance; but this cold blooded, theatrical business . . .

"*Bang!*"

Carlin laughed and shoved his pistol back into his holster.

"What did I tell you?"

With the report of the pistol, the young Moro plunged to the ground like a felled ox. He lay on his face, his legs twitching and flexing in the agony of death. With a last effort he raised a ghastly grinning face toward Carlin and spat at him a Moro word of damnation. A long drawn wail went up from the jungle below.

"That'll hold 'em," Carlin said. He turned to the first sergeant.

"Any casualties, Sergeant?"

The old man grinned.

"That *loco* Crispo get it. More better get rid of a man like that, Captain. He always make trouble and he the very bad shot."

"Right," Carlin said. "Any wounded?"

"Three, sir—not bad."

"Did you get those men off?"

"They go now, sir."

Hoyt was listening.

"So you sent them?" he said.

"I sent them," Carlin answered. "And God help your soul if it turns out to be a wild goose chase. I told them double time and to hell with your map. If there's a pass along there, Gruspe'll find it. He has a nose for the jungle."

"It won't be a wild goose chase," Hoyt said.

Carlin looked at him sharply.

"Listen, my friend," he said. "Don't get the idea in your head that if it does turn out as you said, it will get you anything. As soon as this show is over you're going down to Kiethly in arrest, and you're going to stand trial."

"Oh, go to hell!" Hoyt said softly.

Carlin looked at him, his blue eyes bleak.

"And there'll be another charge," he

said. "Concealing military information in action."

"Make it murder if you want to," Hoyt said wearily.

AN HOUR passed and suddenly there came the dim sound of firing to the south. Carlin tipped his head, listening. A wide grin came over his face.

"Gruspe's on the job," he said softly.

"*You'd* better be," Hoyt said.

Carlin laughed.

"You're a wise guy for a mere lieutenant. Why should I be? All I've got to do is sit tight."

"Don't you know," Hoyt said quietly, "that Pinio'll be on your neck any minute now? Is probably right now moving men up on your flanks to enfilade you. He's heard that firing, too. No more melodramatics for him. He's got to get through here now if he wants to hold his men together. He knows the battalion is on the move."

Carlin looked at Hoyt, speculation in his eyes.

"You've got a damned good military bean on your shoulder at that," he said grudgingly. "Of course, I've made dispositions for that very thing. But who'd guess a damned lieutenant would think of it? You know," he said, grinning a little, "it's too damned bad you got off on the wrong foot. You might have been useful to me. A little guts is what you need. But that lack, my dear Lieutenant, is fatal—"

With a wild yell the Moros broke cover and were on them.

For the next five minutes there was hell let loose. The plain below seemed moving with the mass of naked figures swarming upward. The men fired as fast as they could pull their bolts, and only the perfection of training they had undergone for many harshly disciplined years, and the nerve steadying experience of battle, kept them at their place in the line and made their fire true. Once again the Moros drew off, leaving the field carpeted with bloody bodies. But this time they had pierced the line. Slashed at the hated Scouts with their razor-like *krises*. All along the line came the murmurs and groans of sorely wounded men. The Moros had used rifles, too. And the toll on the little Scout command had been severe. The advanced posts in front had been cut down to a man.

In the excitement Hoyt had seized a bayoneted rifle from a dead Scout's hand. He was determined, now, that he would never face the shame of trial; let Carlin gloat over him. He took over the command of the first platoon, whose sergeant had met a bullet with his mouth.

In the lull that followed the attack, Carlin, wiping the grimy sweat from his face, stared red eyed at him. His eyes fell to the rifle Hoyt still held against his side. Blood dripped slowly from its bayonet, trickling down its hot barrel, on to Hoyt's hand.

"Disobeying orders again, eh?" Carlin said. "That's one more specification."

"Why don't you write the charges out now?" Hoyt said hoarsely. "You can leave them for posterity. The next attack will finish us, Carlin."

Carlin looked off to the east.

"Listen," he said. "That's firing!"

A sudden sinking came to Hoyt's pounding heart. Firing it undoubtedly was. The battalion was in contact with Pinio's rear. The crafty Moro would know what to do now. His men would scatter like dust in a breeze. By twos and threes they were even now melting into the impenetrable jungle to the north and south of the trail. In five minutes there would not be one of them in sight. Well, he had lost the game. Not even a chance to die decently.

"You win, Carlin," Hoyt said, and he dropped the hot rifle and sank wearily to the ground.

A half hour later the excited major was eagerly questioning Carlin for the details of the fight. Carlin smiled slowly. These brevetted regulars, made majors of Scouts for four years, amused him. Lord, the man thought this was a battle!

"I'm going to recommend you for a decoration, Carlin," the major said ad-

miringly. "A perfect piece of work. Getting those men up there at the other pass did it. It stopped the whole show and they came back in confusion right into us. Must have thought you had another company up there, and only one of the squad wounded. Anything I can do for you now?"

"Yes," Carlin said, "send an officer back with my company. I've got a special report I want to make to you back in the post. I'll come in alone, if you don't mind, after I've reorganized a bit."

The major thought Carlin wanted to swank around Kiethly a bit. Well, the man deserved it.

"All right," he said. "We'll push off. Come to my quarters to dinner tonight, will you?"

"Thanks, I will," Carlin said.

The major had sense enough to leave a captain to lead Carlin's company back to Buldong. After the check up of casualties and the burials, Carlin waved him on his way. Hoyt watched Carlin, a growing dread in his heart. The man was beastly. In spite of the exhilaration of victory, of the exultation he must feel at the job he had done and the public praise he had received, there was no generosity in him. How easy it would be for him to say:

"Let's forget it. You came through all right. You proved you were no coward. You gave me the dope that stopped Pinio. Let's call another deal . . ."

But Carlin said:

"There's a pony, Mr. Hoyt. Let's get going."

He pointed to where a soldier stood holding two native ponies that the major had left behind for them at Carlin's request. Desperately Hoyt sparred for time. Was the man actually brute enough to drag him back there to public shame after all they had just been through together?

"Why are you taking me in?" Hoyt asked, his mouth dry.

"I'm taking you in to face a court, Mr. Hoyt," Carlin said. "You'll find that no one's ever accused me of breaking a promise."

"You're a fiend, Carlin. I wish now that I had shot you in the back. I had the chance, you know."

Carlin laughed.

"You didn't have the guts, though," he taunted.

They mounted the ponies. Carlin waved to the captain he had left with his company.

"I'll be back tomorrow night," he called. "Drill as usual in the morning."

Hoyt noticed the look of blank astonishment and protest in the other captain's face. He knew what that captain was thinking. What a devil this Carlin was not to give his men a day off to lick their wounds.

Hoyt kicked his pony on after Carlin's. After all, he didn't have to ride with the man. The trail was too narrow for that.

"Get in front," Carlin ordered, curtly.

Hoyt laughed.

"I'm not armed, Carlin."

"I don't trust you," Carlin said. "You're a big brute and anything might happen in this jungle. Easy to say a Moro got me."

"Maybe one will," Hoyt said. "There's apt to be some of Pinio's men still loose about here. They won't have much love for you, at that, after your target practise on their crown prince."

Carlin laughed loudly.

"There's not a Moro alive I'm afraid of—not in the number we're likely to meet. I've stood off a half dozen of them single handed before this and come out on top."

"You're a rotten braggart, Carlin," Hoyt said.

"But I'm not a liar," Carlin sneered. "I put the stuff over, don't I?"

"Yes, you put the stuff over," Hoyt said, and he looked across his shoulder at Carlin.

THEY rode on in silence. Monkeys jumped from tree to tree above them, peering with their flat, skinned eyes down at these two strange animals. Bright colored birds rustled by them and plumped into

the crowded vines matted against the side of the trail. Hoyt wondered how he could jump Carlin. The man was deadly with a pistol. He'd get in one shot surely. Hoyt wanted to get his big hands on Carlin. Knowing the man's egoism he thought he might taunt him into a fight.

"You're afraid of me, Carlin," he said. "You wouldn't dare get off that pony and fight this out with me."

Carlin laughed.

"You're like all lieutenants," he said. "Dumb. You can't see that this isn't personal. You can't differentiate between an official and a personal affront. If you'd insulted me at table, for instance, I'd be quite likely to smash your face."

Hoyt called Carlin a certain word. He grinned in his face as he said it. Carlin's face whitened.

"How's that for a personal affront, Carlin?"

Carlin said, controlling himself:

"My duty comes first, thanks. After that—well, there's time enough, my lad."

They rode on in silence. Every minute they were coming closer to Kiethly and disgrace for Hoyt. Desperately he sought for a way to get at Carlin. Gladly he would have died to avoid the shame waiting for him, if he could have died in honorable combat. But to be shot down here by Carlin—killed in an attempted murder of a man who would claim he was doing his duty . . . No, if he jumped Carlin, he must get him, absolutely.

Oddly, he had no compunction about killing Carlin. He thought of the man, in his fevered brain, as a beast. It seemed to him that a public duty would be done. Carlin had ruined other men. Now it was time for some one to ruin him.

They rode out into a clearing where the trail widened. Carefully, so as not to alarm Carlin, Hoyt drew his pony in so that little by little he could get the other pony even with him. A chance might come. Carlin might look too long toward the far side of the trail. Then he would leap—drag Carlin from his horse . . .

But Carlin, seeming to sense his thoughts, waved him on, at the same time slowing up his own mount. Hoyt flushed. He hated Carlin more because he might have suspected his purpose. Then Hoyt thought of the shallow stream ahead that they must cross. Surely Carlin, as an ex-cavalry man, would let the ponies drink. They were hot. The minute they stepped into that cool water, they would fight down for it. Hoyt knew this, because he, too, had been a mounted soldier.

But at the stream Carlin waved him forward, curtly ordered him to water, while he, himself, waited on the near bank. The very suspicions of the man infuriated Hoyt. Where his plans up to now had been nebulous and half hearted, they suddenly became a fixed obsession to leap at Carlin, come what might, before they rode another mile.

The trail rose. Hoyt remembered that now it wound around the side of a steep hill, a mere shelf, the ground rising abruptly on the right and sloping off through scattered trees to the left. The engineers had been proud of that job, he recollected; some of them had died at it too.

That would be the place. Crowd Carlin off as though his own pony had balked. Jump on him and go tearing down the earthy slope before he could get to his pistol. And when they brought up at the bottom, he would choke Carlin to death with his bare hands.

They reached the high point on the trail. For a space it moved on, level, around the hill. The only sound was the living voice of the noonday jungle and the clinking of the ponies' hoofs on the hard ground of the beaten trail. They turned a shoulder of the hill. Coming toward them, heads down, plodding in the manner of the *tao*, came a stalwart Moro with his woman, as is the custom, following at a respectful distance. The man paid them no heed, just came steadily on. Hoyt could see that over his right shoulder he carried a Moro *bolo tabas*, or working *bolo*. Ugly things they were, the blade some two feet long, razor sharp, and heavy enough to clip the head from a carabao. The Moros used them for all

manner of work, including even the hewing out of timber. Though forbidden by law to carry the lighter, fighting *barong*, or *kris*, they were permitted to go about with this infinitely more ghastly weapon. Hoyt used to wonder about it until he was told that it was the only means of the *tao* getting his peaceful work done.

He watched the approaching Moro curiously. The fellow was harmless, of course. The trail was just wide enough to pass him closely. Why not grab the *bolo* out of his hands and, before Carlin could get at his gun, hurl it at him. It was a chance. It might work.

The Moro was within a few yards of him now. He looked up, his eyes passing over Hoyt and seeming to fix themselves on Carlin. They were red, vicious eyes, alive with terrible hate. Hoyt glanced back at Carlin, a little astonished at this unexpected look in the supposedly peaceful *tao's* face. Why should a common Moro peasant look at the great lord of a white captain in such a way?

Hoyt saw that Carlin was drawing his pistol.

"Get back!" Carlin said to him. And to the Moro he snarled in the dialect, "Get down off the road until we pass! Don't you know the white man's law?"

The man bared his yellow teeth. His woman closed up behind him, grinning fiendishly over his shoulder.

"Was it that law that murdered our beautiful Datu Baku?" she asked.

Carlin raised his pistol.

"Get back—out of my way!" Carlin said to Hoyt.

Hoyt completely forgot what he had meant to do to Carlin. He was fascinated by the man's eyes as they stared at the fanatical Moro. He reigned his pony pack, squeezing by Carlin's mount against the inner wall of the trail.

"Get down off the trail!" Carlin again warned the Moro.

The man spat at him.

"Eater of *babui*. Unbeliever pig!" He rushed at Carlin.

Carlin fired. The heavy bullet caught the Moro squarely between the eyes, tearing out the back of his head. He fell as from a great height, hard on his face. Carlin's pony, unused to firing, reared, gave a wild leap, and rolled down the side of the trail, Carlin clinging desperately to the saddle. The Moro woman screamed and ran to her man. She bent over him, moaning, wailing, her scarlet painted mouth drooling.

AT THE SHOT Hoyt's mount, too, had reared. He leaped from it, holding it back from the lip of the trail by the reins. He stared down at Carlin. Some thirty feet below, Carlin lay, pinned under his pony. The animal thrashed and kicked, but Hoyt could see that one of its hind legs had twisted under it, broken. The weight of the animal kept Carlin from moving. He lay on his side, the pistol still in his hand, calling up to Hoyt.

"Get me out of here!"

Hoyt leaned over the edge of the slope.

"Go to hell!" he said.

The eyes of the two men met. Suddenly Hoyt saw those of Carlin dilate with horror. He seemed to be staring beyond himself. Hoyt whirled around. The Moro woman had reached the edge of the trail, and was grinning down at Carlin. In her hand she held the razor sharp *bolo tabas*. She utterly ignored Hoyt. Carefully she stepped over into the soft dirt that had been filled against the side of the hill when the cut of the trail was dug out. Her eyes never left Carlin. No words were needed to explain what was in her simple, savage mind. There lay the man who had killed her man. And her man's *bolo* was in her hand. Allah be praised!

"For God's sake, stop her!" Carlin said. "My gun's jammed." Hoyt could see the sudden wave of sweat that came out on his sunburned forehead.

"Stop her yourself," Hoyt said. "You're the only man fit to bear arms in this party."

The woman was now well over the edge. Carefully, as though searching for mushrooms, she worked her way down-

ward, clutching at vines and bits of root to steady her on the steep descent. Hoyt saw that Carlin was working feverishly at his pistol. He laughed down at Carlin. He knew now why the man's eyes had dilated with the fear of death, death which he said he scorned. His pistol was jammed. Let him work on it. In his cramped position he wouldn't have a chance to get that empty shell out, slide another cartridge home, aim and fire.

He had Carlin at last where he wanted him. And there'd be no murder on his soul. A life for a life. That was the law of the Koran; and who was he to laugh in the face of Allah?

"You're a great soldier, Carlin. You ought to carry a revolver the way any good Scout soldier would. Don't ask me for help. You said yourself you could handle half a dozen of them single handed. And now, old fellow, all you've got is a poor weak woman to deal with."

"Hoyt," Carlin said, in a stiff, strained voice, "you're not going to stand there and watch this. You're a white man, Hoyt."

"*Mister* Hoyt, if you please, Captain! And this is entirely a personal matter, as your own subtle sense must see. Merely a duel of wits between you and a lady, Captain! Would you withdraw those frivolous charges, Captain, if I lent a hand?"

"Go to hell!" Carlin said.

The woman was close to Carlin now. A tangle of briars had held her up a little and she was freeing her *sarong* from them carefully, so as not to tear it. Hoyt could see that Carlin could not seem to get his shoulder around quite far enough to give his hand the necessary purchase to pull the pistol slide back.

The hag paused, smoothing her *sarong* about her. She spat down on Carlin.

"I'm going to cut your living heart out, pig!" she said.

Carlin had quit working at the pistol. He must have seen that it was hopeless in the time he had left. He looked up squarely into that awful face, holding the pistol toward her.

"You make me laugh," he said in the dialect.

Something about the man's bold, handsome face, set before absolutely certain death with that mocking smile, shook Hoyt.

"You make me laugh," he repeated in English. He realized, as he said the words aloud, that his voice was hysterical, that great tears were burning his eyes.

The music of Carlin's piano in the dead of the jungle night came back to him. . .

It was a tremendous leap, even for a man of Hoyt's activity. He landed squarely on the woman's back. She crumpled under him like a sawdust filled doll. He pushed her away from him and stood over Carlin.

Carlin looked up at him, a quizzical smile on his hard face.

"What you crying about?" Carlin said.

Hoyt said nothing. With a heave of his great shoulders he flung the pony away from Carlin. The captain rose slowly to his feet, gingerly feeling of his legs.

"Nothing busted, anyway," he said.

Hoyt avoided the other man's eyes.

"Better fix that jam. There may be more of them about."

Carlin smiled, a curiously tender sort of grin.

"What jam?" he said, and he held the pistol out to the other.

Startled, Hoyt saw that the gun was in perfect working order.

Slowly, Carlin pushed it back into his holster.

The eyes of the two men met.

"Yes, I could have got her when she first started down. But I thought I'd give you one more test."

"What does that prove?" Hoyt said in a low voice.

"That I've found the lieutenant I've been looking for, Hoyt. Let's push back to the *bosque* where we belong. I wouldn't trust that captain twenty-four hours with troops of mine."

They turned west up the trail, walking side by side.

The CAMP-FIRE

A free-to-all meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers

KNIGHTS TEMPLAR and Hospitalers. The following reader's question, which I sent on to Harold Lamb, elicits from him some interesting information about the soldier-monks, subsequent to the period covered in his recent Crusades series in our pages.

Manchester, New Hampshire

The tales of the Crusades which have been appearing in *Adventure* have given me the same thrill as did Harold Lamb's earlier "Iron Men and Saints" which came to me through the "Book of the Month Club." His tales have also aroused in me a curiosity about the Templars which I do not know where best to satisfy. Perhaps you will give us some further tales about the Templars.

I seem to remember that after the expulsion from the Holy Land the Templars held and fortified Rhodes, their war galleys sallying forth to prey upon the commerce of the infidel. Did not Rhodes successfully survive several sieges before it finally succumbed to Islam? It would seem as though there lay subject matter for many a good tale by Mr. Lamb.

In the meantime, can you tell me of any books within reach of a moderate purse, which deal with the exploits of the Templars, particularly while they held Rhodes? —W. H. YOUNG

Mr. Lamb's reply:

Piedmont, California

No, the order of the Temple was pretty well destroyed by the persecution in 1310. It was the Hospitalers (Knights of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem) who moved over to Rhodes from Cyprus, in 1308, after both orders were driven by the Moslems from the coast of the Holy Land.

The Hospitalers fortified Rhodes, especially the port. Their works stand well preserved today, having been restored a bit by the Italian government. The *Via dei Cavalieri* or Street of the Knights is almost unchanged, and the people of Rhodes still point out to you the sectors of the bastions held by the different Tongues—that is, by the soldiers speaking different languages: the Catalans, Provençals, English and so on. I visited the place, with the other islands, in the autumn of 1929.

RHODES, as you say, was besieged at least twice by the Turks and surrendered after a valiant resistance to the overwhelming army of Sulaiman the Magnificent in 1522. The Turks were extending their power eastward, and after a continuous effort of twenty years, captured Candia, the fortress of Crete, garrisoned by Hospitalers and others in 1648. Meanwhile the Knights, driven out of Rhodes, established their quarters in Malta and beat off all attacks, including the famous siege of 1565, when La Valette was Grand Master. Thereafter the port of Valetta was made impregnable, and its defenders came to be known as the Knights of Malta.

So for the greater part of five centuries the Knights were in service against the Moslems. The present Museum of Malta contains an assortment of their arms and trophies. But the Museum of the Janissaries at Stamboul has just as fine a lot of trophies taken from the European armies. They even have a rare thing—a captured English battle flag. They told me this came from Gallipoli, but I'm not so sure.

I do not know any book now in print that gives a good account of the Templars. The article in the Encyclopedia Britannica is worth reading, and gives various titles of books. —HAROLD LAMB

A FEW words from L. G. Blochman in connection with "A Guest of State," his story in this issue:

New York City

For the benefit of those who delight in digging out fact bases for stories, I might say that the United States Government does go to the trouble and expense of making guests of state of men like *Frisco Cameron*. I can't quote any figures, but I know that scarcely an Army transport sails from Manila without a few indigent whites aboard. Strangely enough, nine out of ten *Frisco Camerons* object strenuously to repatriation. If given the alternative, they almost invariably choose the six months' sentence in Bilibid prison rather than the trip home. They dread being exiled from the tropics, the lazy man's paradise, where even panhandling is easier and pleasanter. —L. G. BLOCHMAN

CHARLES L. CLIFFORD, who wrote "Hoyt of the Macabebes" in this issue, tells us a bit about the "Little Macs", whom he calls the Cossacks of the Philippines.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

As to the Macabebes: Natives of the province of Pampanga, in Luzon, the Macabebes proper inhabit one lone town of probably not more than six thousand souls in that province, and from this they take their name. From a soldier's viewpoint they are by far the most interesting people of the Islands except the Moros. They were early organized by the Spanish conquerors into fighting units and remained loyal to their alien masters against their own people.

They deserted the Filipino cause in the Insurrection and came over to the Americans, being organized into what was then called the Squadron Philippine Cavalry, though it was not mounted and fought as an infantry battalion. It was a company of this outfit that made the epic march to Palanan under Funston, disguised as Insurrectos. There they surprised Aguinaldo with a small bodyguard, captured him, and so were instrumental in bringing hostilities to a close. Every man in this company volunteered, although they were aware that if captured by the Filipinos, it meant a cruel death for them. And it is interesting to remember that they expected to find a force of five hundred against them.

THESE Spartans are bred for war. It is the ambition of every young man of the town to become a Scout soldier. They are merciless in battle and troublesome in the garrison, having frequent rows with men of other battalions. They are cordially hated by other Filipinos, most especially by the Tagalogs, who call them traitors. The Tagalogs call them *dugong-aso* or dog-blooded—but not so that they can be heard!

The people of Pampanga are not liked by the Tagalogs, but the Macabebes are anathema. They say that these men are mercenaries; that they have sold their people for the pay of soldiers. I have heard them likened to Hessians, Prussians and to Judas Iscariot. They are not a distinct race, as is sometimes supposed, but Malays like the others. They speak the language of their province.

FOR some odd reason, only this one village of the province has these warlike traits. The town itself is a quiet agricultural community, kept prosperous by sugar cane and the wages of its warriors. I have never been assigned to a Macabebe

battalion, but served with them in several posts. The Illocanos I was with seemed to get along fairly well with them, but distrusted them. I remember standing by some of the men of my company, watching a transport load of Macabebes arriving for station in our garrison. The faces of the Illocanos were gloomy. They kept muttering, "Macabebe! . . . Macabebe!" they were so obviously disturbed that I asked one of them what they thought of these brothers-in-arms. He said, "*Mucho molesto*"—plenty of trouble. "Now we lose our *delagas* in the *barrio*." And sure enough, but a few days passed before they were scrapping over the little brunettes of the village near the post.

On another occasion, one of these Macabebes killed his wife with his bayonet. Upon being confronted with evidence of his crime by his captain, he admitted it readily enough; but apologized profusely for his unsoldierly conduct in carrying his arms home!

ONE day, while in command of a detachment of Macabebes guarding some prisoners who were at work, I asked a particularly dumb looking private what he would do if one of them tried to escape. The man understood little English, and to illuminate my question I pointed to a nearby prisoner and said, "Would you shoot?" His pock marked face lighted. He whipped up his sawed off shot-gun, pointed it at the prisoner, and said questioningly, "I shut?" If I had merely nodded, that poor *prisoniero* would have been blown to Kingdom Come. He understood the word "shoot" all right!

—CHARLES L. CLIFFORD

WHAT is comfortably cold weather in the Far North? One of several letters received answering the question recently raised here by one of you:

Olympia, Washington.

In your April 15th issue, Mr. Harry Briggs asks whether 45° below is considered very cold in the Far North.

I spent twenty-six years in Alaska, and feel qualified to answer that question.

In Bering Sea or the Arctic 45° is cold; too cold for safety; principally because the cold spells are usually accompanied by heavy winds; and the air is damp on account of proximity to the salt chuck.

In the Yukon Valley the first cold spell usually comes in November and runs around 60°. It always felt real cold to me; but later on the thermometer drops to 70°, or some years 80°.

So, towards Spring, 40° is merely wild weather, and no one thinks of lying up for such a temperature. I have worked all day in 66° without suffering any serious inconvenience.

"Frozen lungs" are fairly common in the Yukon; but I do not know whether the expression is accurate *i.e.*, whether the lungs really are frosted. Most sufferers feel a good deal of sharp stabbing pain for a few days and then recover. But I have known men to die from the ailment. Generally it is considered safe enough to work outside at any temperature above 70°. And at *any* natural temperature if you to not work too hard, and rest if you begin to get winded.

Perhaps I should say "take it easier" instead of "rest." At seventy and eighty below zero you would not last long if you sat down and "rested."

—HUGH T. SAPPINGS

A NOTE sent in by Gordon Carroll touching on some of the historical sources of his story "Missing", in this issue:

Easton, Maryland

Much has been written of Jutland; less has been digested. Most of it has been of an argumentative nature, with enthusiastic British and German adherents still clinging to their original views, despite the long range verbal broadsides extending over a period of fifteen years. So far be it from me to join the debate. But at least I can say this:

That for pure drama, shorn of such questions as to who won the battle and why, Jutland still holds its place at the top of the sagas of naval history. In its entirety, the story of Jutland really dissolves, for the lay reader, into an incredible tale of bits of individual heroism, of gripping personal action, of the blood of tradition—and, particularly, of lost opportunities. For, during those awful hours on the North Sea, a straw tossed to either side of the scales might have changed the destiny of nations.

BUT the battle is over, the smoke long vanished. But this ought to be remembered: that Jutland was the first—and some say the last—clash between two mighty, modern fleets, in which all the handmaidens of science were employed. Aircraft, radio, submarines, and the new-found speed of great turbines were used, with varying degrees of success. And that the results were not more decisive is the kernel of the argument which I mention in the first paragraph. In other words, history offers no parallel.

The story of the *Ledham* is naturally pure fiction. But her adventures are not beyond the realm of possibility. Suppose I quote from Admiral Jellicoe's report, where he gives a glimpse of the speed with which harsh problems took shape at Jutland, and how they were solved as rapidly. Remember, Jellicoe, commanding the great Battle Fleet, was converging on Jutland from the naval bases at Cromarty and Scapa Flow:

"AT 5:45 P.M. the report of guns had become audible, and at 5:55, flashes were visible from ahead around to the starboard beam, although in the mist no ships could be distinguished, and the posi-

tion of the enemy's Battle Fleet could not be determined . . .

"I formed the Battle Fleet in line of battle on receipt of Sir David Beatty's report at 6:14, and during deployment, the fleets became engaged. Beatty had meanwhile formed the Battle Cruisers ahead of the Battle Fleet . . .

"At 6:06, the Rear-Admiral commanding the 5th Battle Squadron, then in company with the Battle Cruisers, had sighted the starboard wing division of the Battle Fleet . . . On realizing the direction of deployment, he was compelled to form astern (of the Battle Fleet), a maneuver which was well executed under a heavy fire from the enemy. *An accident to Warspite's steering gear caused her helm to jam, and took the ship in the direction of the enemy's line . . .*"

The italics are mine. And such incidents did happen.

THE point where all the turning took place has been called "Windy Corner," and it earned its name. Apart from the risk and excitement of a score of large ships and thirty or forty small ships all converging on to a point from every direction, the Germans were concentrating fire on the "brown" of the turning point, so that the sea was torn up by shell flashes and the noise was terrific. Every ship was steaming at high speed, and the majority of them were replying to the Germans by firing their own broadsides over the heads of any British light craft that lay closeby. There was handling of ships in that ten minutes such as seamen had never dreamt of before.

From the narrative of H.M.S. *Warrior:*

"After giving the *Wiesbaden* two final salvos, which appeared to finish her, for she vanished in a cloud of smoke, I withdrew from action, zigzagging to avoid the enemy salvos. The *Warspite* was then two miles astern of her squadron, having made a large circle towards the enemy as her steering gear had jammed. I had intended to pass astern of her, but finding she was turning to starboard, I also turned to starboard and passed ahead of her. As she came between the *Warrior* and the enemy, she drew upon herself all the fire that previously had been concentrated upon us, which undoubtedly saved the *Warrior* from being sunk."

MORE about the *Warrior*, concerning her wrecked engine room, torn by shell fire and concussion:

"Water was breast high over the floor plates . . . The surprising thing was that the engines went on working till the water was halfway up the cylinders, and only stopped when the boilers were cut off."

From the narrative of the famous destroyer *Spitfire*, which rammed a German cruiser:

"As we neared the *Tipperary* (another British destroyer), we saw a German cruiser hovering near . . . With an awful crash, we met her, port bow to port bow, we steaming along at 27 knots, the German at 20 . . . I recollect a fearful crash, then being hurled across the deck, and feeling the *Spitfire* rolling over to starboard as no sea ever made her roll. As we bumped, the enemy cruiser opened fire, though luckily they could not depress their guns to hit us, but their blast literally swept everything away before it. The cruiser surged down our port side, clearing everything before her; the boats came, crashing down and even the davits were torn out and all the time she was firing just over our heads . . . Eventually the cruiser passed the length of us, cleared astern and disappeared, leaving us still afloat but in pitiful condition . . . After inspection, the engineers said the ship was capable of steaming . . . The bulkheads were holding tight . . . So we shaped course, and all on board began to feel happier . . ."

THERE are more of these narratives—plenty more—but there is not space for further quoting. And I have several photographs of the *Spitfire*, and other ships, as they limped into the Tyne on June 2. Believe me, they were merely floating, battered hulks!

Many ships disappeared at Jutland, leaving no witnesses. For instance, the *Black Prince*, whose story has never been told—and perhaps never will. Maybe she took the course I mapped for the *Ledham* . . . In any event, no one can deny or affirm with equanimity.

—GORDON CARROLL

SEVERAL more verses of "Zamboanga," the marching song of the Twenty-seventh Infantry. The reader who sent it in forgot to sign his name, but the appended comment would indicate his version is authentic enough:

ZAMBOANGA

Oh, the monkeys have no tails in Zamboanga,
Oh, the monkeys have no tails in Zamboanga,
Oh, the monkeys have no tails,
They were bitten off by whales,
Oh, the monkeys have no tails in Zamboanga.

Chorus.

Oh, I'll lick the man who says it isn't so.
Oh, I'll lick the man who says it isn't so.
Oh, the monkeys have no tails,
They were bitten off by whales.
Oh, I'll lick the man who says it isn't so.

(*For each subsequent chorus substitute the third and fourth lines of the preceding verse.*)

Oh, the carabao have no hair in Mindanao,
Oh, the carabao have no hair in Mindanao,
Oh, the carabao have no hair,
And they run around quite bare,
For the carabao have no hair in Mindanao.

Chorus.
(As indicated)
Oh, they live in nipa shacks in Iloilo,
Oh, they live in nipa shacks in Iloilo,
Oh, they live in nipa shacks,
And they peek right through the cracks,
Oh, they live in nipa shacks in Iloilo.

Chorus
Oh, we lived ten thousand years in old Cebu,
Oh, we lived ten thousand years in old Cebu,
And it didn't smell like roses,
So we had to hold our noses,
When we lived ten thousand years in old Cebu.

Chorus
Oh, the birdies have no feet in Mariveles,
Oh, the birdies have no feet in Mariveles,
Oh, the birdies have no feet,
They were burned off by the heat,
Oh, the birdies have no feet in Mariveles.

Chorus
Oh, we won't go back to Subic any more,
Oh, we won't go back to Subic any more,
Oh, we won't go back to Subic,
Where they mix their wine with tubig,
Oh, we won't go back to Subic any more.

Chorus
Oh, the men they wear no pants in Baguio,
Oh, the men they wear no pants in Baguio,
Oh, the men they wear no pants,
They were eaten off by ants,
Oh, the men they wear no pants in Baguio.

Chorus
Oh, we'll all go up to China in the springtime,
Oh, we'll all go up to China in the springtime,
Oh, we'll all go up to China,
I can think of nothing finer,
Oh, we'll all go up to China in the spring.

This is the "Zamboanga" of the soldiers—not the academic "Zamboanga" of the school children. The latter is a beautiful song, but lacks the swing of the former. There are, of course, many other verses, some of which would shock our long haired men and short haired women in these good United States.

The song is quite out of place in the States. To fully enjoy it one must have a balmy tropical evening, a snappy native orchestra, a good crowd (without any "holier-than-thou" element), numerous "Sandakans" under the belt (Scotch if you prefer) and a carefree spirit.

"IF ONLY I were a writer. How many interesting experiences I might pass on to the members of Camp-fire!"

Often I come across this sentiment in readers' letters. Mr. Wilson voices it in the appended communication. And numerous others of you have thought it silently. Therefore it behooves me to stress once again, with as much emphasis as possible, the informality of this forum.

You don't have to boast any literary ability to get a hearing at the 'Fire. You don't have to have a typewriter to say your say. None of the rules binding on writers has the slightest weight here. Save one. Have you something worthwhile to talk about? That's all; and any of you who are accustomed to hang back because you can't turn fine phrases or hammer out smart looking copy on a machine, please take notice.

The Camp-fire has flourished for almost twenty years now, fed by the friendly and very informal contributions of our members—readers, writers and editors alike. It's rather too late to begin standing on ceremony now, isn't it?

Coronado, California

Perhaps one of you fellows sitting back there on your heels may have sufficient intimate knowledge of Santo Domingo and the native lingo used by the out country inhabitant to tell me the derivation of a salutation they use to one another in passing on the road. This salutation sounds as though spelled: "abool-abool". "Uncle Joe" Pendleton (Maj.-Gen. J. H. Pendleton, Marine Corps, Retired; but every one who knows him calls him "Uncle Joe") spent, as you know, many months in that neck of the woods, but he tells me he never was able to find any one who knew the derivation of the expression; although after considerable inquiry, he discovered it to mean the equivalent of our "good morning." Its literal meaning is "Go to hell"! Incidentally, Uncle Joe has had many interesting experiences, which mostly have to be dragged out of him by the right combination of company and circumstances. Wish I were a writer able to pass some of them along to "the gang."

One more item: There have been several letters in Camp-fire about the gila monster. Here's something may interest those interested in this animal: I have in my possession a movie reel showing an Indian (or, maybe, Mexican) fondling one of the darned things, and he is shown actually putting the head of the brute into his mouth! Yes, and the blasted thing is alive, too. The exposure was made by my wife who was taking an auto trip with my son and friend over in New Mexico, en tour to Mesa Verde Park. That fellow also had a tamed mountain lion for a pet, and the film shows him playing with it. He can have 'em for all of me!

—F. L. WILSON

ASK Adventure

For Free Information and Services You Can't Get Elsewhere

Jangada

A SEA-GOING raft used by the fishermen down Pernambuco way.

Request:—"We are enclosing a photograph of a model of a balsa wood sea-going raft which we have recently presented to the Museum of Science and Industry in New York City. The model was procured some time ago by one of our observers, but the description has been misplaced. As we wish to give the Museum some particulars regarding the boat, we wrote to Mr. J. T. Howard, formerly with our Department, in the hope that he could supply the necessary details. While he had no information himself, he said that you were the leading authority on matters relating to certain countries of South America and that you could probably indicate the region in which this particular boat is used and supply us with details regarding it. It has been suggested that the boat is used off the northwest coast of Peru or Ecuador, but this information was not definite; it may be, of course, that it is used in other parts of South America where balsa wood is native.

Any information you may be able to furnish us will be greatly appreciated, both by the Museum of Science and Industry and our Department.

—JNO. A. FLEMING

Acting Director, Carnegie Institution of Washington, Department of Research in Terrestial Magnetism

Reply, by Mr. Edgar Young:—The raft whose photograph you sent me is, as you have correctly stated, built of balsa, *Ochroma lagopus,* a tree of the bombax family. The seasoned wood weighs from 7 to 8 lbs. per cu. ft. and is consequently about twice as buoyant as cork. The word balsa is Sp. Portuguese from the Peruvian *balza,* a raft. This particular type of raft, however, is not used off the northwest coat of South America along the Pêruvian and Ecuadorian coast. The balsawood seagoing rafts are much different; the only thing they have in common with this raft is the centerboard-rudder. They are usually made of two large balsa logs held together with slats and the logs are not shaped as these are. The small seagoing fishing rafts of this vicinity are not made of balsa. They are about the same size as this one, made of cigar shaped floats, but these floats are not balsa but shaped bundles of grass or rushes. They are mounted astride by the intrepid fisherman, who puts right out to sea with them, now and then using his oar as a listening apparatus to tell if the bottom is rocky or sand. The vibration tells him, and if rocky bottom at the right location is found he drops his stone anchor and does his fishing, stringing them alongside his little horse (*cavallito*) and towing them home in this fashion. These Indians have little to do with strangers and carry on their affairs about the same as they did when Gran Chinu ruled them before the advent of the Spaniards. You see flotillas of these little rafts far out to sea, and at a quick glance one would suppose them to be identical with the raft you portray.

No, sir, and I say this without fear of anybody's contradiction, this raft comes from a place almost on a line across the South American continent. It is a *jangada,* true to type in every detail. It is a seagoing fishing raft, and one sees them darting like arrows before the wind or beating into it by aid of the centerboard rudder. Your photo does not show the sail but it is usually triangular or pennant shaped. The particular section of the east coast of Brazil where they are most extensively used is between Pernambuco and Ceará (Forteleza). The fishermen who use it are *mestizos* or mixed Spanish Indian but the almost identical prototype of this craft was in use by the aborigines when the Spaniards first came to South America, and how long before no one knows. The only possible variation would be the sail of canvas instead of reeds or rushes and the bracing of the sail-step, which appears on the photo to be of strap iron.

Pidgin

GIBBERISH—limited but picturesque —which makes you wonder why Englishmen permitted baby-talk to take such a hold when proper English, in a generation, would have been almost as easy.

Request:—"I am writing to you for information regarding pidgin English which I have heard so much about. Is it spoken to a considerable extent among natives there? I have read that there are English-pidgin dictionaries for sale. Is this true, and could you tell me where I could obtain one?"

—JOHN D. MACLENNAN, New York City

Reply, by Mr. L. P. B. Armit:—Pidgin English is spoken all through the Pacific Islands, though it varies considerably in various groups. In the Territory of New Guinea (formerly German New Guinea) the German settlers had to use pidgin to communicate with the natives, who did not understand German. In the Territory of Papua, which is also a part of New Guinea, pidgin is spoken to a considerable extent, but the official language is proper English, which is taught in all the schools.

If you write to W. R. Carpenter & Co., Ltd., Rabaul, New Britain, Territory of New Guinea, you may be able to get a book on pidgin English; I recollect hearing that somebody over there had published a book on the gibberish. However, I am not certain that this latter statement is accurate, so do not be too sure of it.

Navy

WHEN a war vessel goes into action its decks and hold are cleared of all possible inflammable material.

Request:—Is it correct that all boats, etc., are thrown overboard when a fighting ship goes into action?"—C. ROYAL BOUR, Astoria, Long Island

Reply, by Lieut. F. V. Greene:—When a war is impending, unnecessary boats and other articles are left ashore. This is called "stripping ship." The crew remove from the ship and leave at Navy yards or such other place as may be designated for safe keeping such articles as unnecessary boats; bunks; wooden furniture; wooden chests; wooden lockers; wooden doors; spars and booms not required in war; stanchions for awnings; boat davits; gangway and other ladders; unnecessary clothing of officers and men; unnecessary canvas, such as awnings and weather cloths; steel ventilators, substituting canvas where possible; mess tables and benches; all inflammables, such as gasoline, paints, oils not needed for war purposes. Such boats as may be needed are kept aboard. This stripping ship is done carefully and methodically. The main idea is to make the ship as safe as possible from fire due to the incendiary effect of bursting shells, insure minimum risk to personnel from splinters, and yet keep everything on board required for use in war. Care must be taken not to go too far and make the personnel uncomfortable. Many articles of comfort can be thrown overboard at the last minute or stowed somewhere below decks.

Another evolution in getting ready for action is known as "Clear ship for action." This is done when the vessel is at sea; in this case all unnecessary inflammables are thrown overboard. The boats are kept aboard, however. These are carried in skids, and in preparation for battle have canvas lashed about them. The idea being to keep splinters from flying in case they are hit by shellfire. Splinters are very dangerous.

Modern vessels are supposed always to fight under way, though it is possible that a ship might have to prepare for a fight at anchor. In this case the boats would probably be sent ashore or anchored away from the ship.

In war time Naval vessels are kept cleared for action at all times, if they are anywhere near the zone of operations. The commander-in-chief, or senior officer present, directs what boats shall be kept aboard.

Boxing

IF YOU catch a punch in the face the way you catch a baseball it won't hurt as much. That is, ride along with the blow a little way.

Request:—"My great trouble in boxing seems to be that I can not take punches in the face. Would appreciate any instructions."

—BERNARD SULLIVAN, Chicago, Illinois

Reply, by Capt. Jean V. Grombach:—The punch which results in knockouts is not the heavy club-like full swing with taut muscles. The knockout punch is a shock punch which is a short and snappy wallop delivered by a sudden tautening of the muscles from their usual loose and relaxed condition assumed while boxing.

I suggest that you perfect your defense; if a punch gets by you, ride your head with the punch as it hits you; you "soften" it up. All this can be likened to the way one catches a baseball.

Stone

CAT'S eye may be of chrysoberyl, quartz or petrified wood. The idea of a petrified eye is one of fancy alone.

Request:—"A ring in my possession was purchased in Scotland a good many years ago. The stones in it are called cat's eyes. There are three stones; the center stone reflects a light from the center and each side, while the other two have a narrow gold colored stripe up the center that shades off a little on each side when the light strikes them

right. Are these mined stones or are they really petrified eyes? What is the correct name for them? Value?"—F. G. YOUNG, Sacramento, California

Reply, by Mr. F. J. Esterlin:—The true cat's eye is a chrysoberyl, being a yellowish green and showing a chatoyant band of light across the stone when light falls upon it. It is a fairly valuable stone, its exact value depending entirely upon size, quality of the material and clearness of the opalescent band of light, which can be determined only by examination of the stone.

Quartz sometimes shows a like chatoyancy, and is called quartz cat's eye. This material is not as valuable.

Crocidelite (tiger eye) or a type of petrified wood from Brazil, shows a silky luster when polished, and occurs in greens and browns. The light in this case follows the grain of the wood. This is not a very valuable material, but in any case the idea of a petrified eye is one of fancy alone.

Dynamite

OUR mining expert gives some advice on the use of high explosives.

Request:—"I desire information concerning the use of dynamite. I find no one in your list of experts who gives information directly on this subject, but I am sending this to you.

I am in charge of dismantling a large sawmill and I find I could use an explosive to advantage, tearing down brick walls and getting machine beds and frames into such shape that I can handle them.

I would greatly appreciate answers to the following questions and any other information that might be given.

1. Will the firing of one stick, in a brick wall, set off other sticks a few feet away? What is the greatest probable spacing?

2. How is the cap hooked up in electrical firing? Is it necessary to use a cap as in firing with a fuse? Is it possible to make a firing apparatus out of a hot shot battery and other fixtures?

3. In which direction is the greatest force exerted, endwise or sidewise?

4. Where may I obtain booklets or pamphlets in the use and handling of dynamite?"

—R. V. BATES, Warren, Arkansas

Reply, by Mr. Victor Shaw:—My department covers mining, and naturally the use of various high explosive including dynamite. In fact, I've handled dynamite in carload lots, and used it almost every way on surface or underground.

1. No, your chance of exploding other sticks placed near (but not wired for detonation) is too uncertain for good work. Connect them *all* up and you can place them at any distance to accomplish what you wish. You'll judge your walls—if seamed or cracked, etc.—and place the explosive only where needed most. On a *sound* blank wall of, say, twelve inch thickness, I'd say to place your sticks thus: 2-3 together at intervals of about 8-10 feet; with handpowder (⅞ inch) use not less than 3 sticks for good results and for machine powder use 2 sticks. Better use an extra stick than get an unsatisfactory break. And, I'd use 40% for such work, although you might make the 20% perform. Much depends on the height and thickness of your walls. Get charge in *center* of wall.

2. Special denotating device, which all comes together with the apparatus, including wires and battery. Doesn't cost much; if you can locate a used outfit, just as good. You *can*, of course, lay your sticks and cut your regulation fuses ½ inch shorter on each one starting from the longest, which latter should give you time to spit the rest and get clear. Slit fuse-end to light, and put in a crumb of dynamite to insure lighting. Same result, if you can't manage electric.

3. There is absolutely nothing to the old-woman's idea that dynamite explodes with greater force downward, or any other direction. It explodes with the same identical force *in all directions* at once. What started the idea, I suppose, is that the force is so great in *any* direction that when laid for example upon a boulder, it will break although the greater portion of the force is expended in the air. Mud-capping, I've always doubted as an aid; also, tamping a drilled hole. Naturally, however, when a charge of this explosive or any other, is confined tightly on all sides, its tearing force is increased. Equally, if there are cracks in a wall, or rock face, the force will seek the least resistance and be expended toward its easy outlet. Have to take advantage of this fact, in placing the charges to demolish a mortared wall.

4. Consult text books in some public library under head of "Mines and Mining"—or, get hold of them perhaps at some engineering school or college—or I'm sure there is a pamphlet issued on this subject by the E. I. Du Pont De Nemours & Co. Might write also to the Atlas Powder Co. and the Apache Powder Co.

Motorboat

REGISTRATION at your nearest custom house is required.

Request:—Two of us have bought a hull and have installed an old Stutz (1921) 4-cylinder engine in the bed where the old engine was. We are putting a cabin on from stem to amidship. We have never been around a boat before. Is it necessary to get a license or do we just put it in the water? There were some old numbers on the bow when we bought it. It is practically a new boat, as the only thing we had to start with was a bare open hull; it is 26 ft. long and 9 ft. wide amidship. Will draw at least 1½ ft. of water.

Please tell me whether we should get a new license

or go back to the man we bought the hull from and get his. He said it was not necessary."

—ALFRED S. SMITH, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Reply, by Mr. Gerald T. White:—The man from whom you purchased your boat had the numbers which appeared upon her bow registered in his name. He should have immediately notified the nearest custom house of the change of ownership. In fact, he runs the chance of a stiff jail term or fine for not notifying the authorities of the change of ownership.

You must have the boat registered in your name, otherwise you will be running in violation of the law and liable to a penalty. Go to him immediately and have him change the registry of the boat to your name. In most cases the same numbers are used, but the name of the latest owner is placed against the old number.

If you go to the custom house they may issue new numbers to you, but then they may take steps to hold the previous owner. Do not, under any circumstances, operate the boat until you have proof that she bears numbers registered in your name.

Otherwise there is no license required as long as you do not carry passengers for hire. However, you must have on board certain lifesaving, navigating and fire fighting equipment as well as two copies of the pilot rules. Write or call at your custom house for the complete list of items required.

Bird

CARE and feeding of parrakeets.

Request:—"Could I trouble you for information on the care and feeding of parrakeets?"

—DR. GEO. WITTMAIER, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Reply, by Mr. Davis Quinn:—A good diet for your parrakeets is: oats, canary seed and millet, with a small additional quantity of the richer sunflower and hemp seeds. Supply green foods and ripe fruits freely. Do not feed meat or any of its derivatives, as milk, butter, cheese, etc., or bones, tea, coffee, candy, cake, and so forth, on peril of the birds' health if not their lives. Provide water for drinking, and a piece of rock salt, but introduce the birds to these two gradually lest they overindulge in the beginning.

It is essential that these birds take a certain amount of grit, gravel or small stones with their food. A piece of soft wood to gnaw will be gratefully received and will save wooden perches from a like fate.

Keep parrakeets in as large a cage as possible, fitted with as many perches as the cage will hold without obstructing a flying path for the birds. The cage should be of tin or galvanized iron wire or even wood in preference to brass, which corrodes and becomes a poison menace to the birds within. Two or three sides of the cage should be closed to shield the birds from draughts. Let them fly in the room often. Place a pan of water in the room for them to bathe as often as you allow this liberty; if they will not bathe, spray their plumage with tepid water frequently. Incidentally all members of the parrot family seem generally to lack the homing instinct and if turned loose out of the house they do not return.

Siberia

GOLD got in the icy country across from Alaska is well earned.

Request:—"Could you inform me where I could secure maps of Siberian coast next to Alaska. I am interested in minerals—especially gold."

—CARLISLE SMITH, Garrett, Indiana

Reply, by Mr. C. L. Oliver:—I have had bad luck with Siberian charts and maps; they couldn't be depended on for close work. My advice is to get the latest charts from the U. S. Hydrographic Bureau at Washington, D. C. and don't fail to get a local man for pilot and ice pilot. You can pick up a good one in Nome, Alaska.

There is plenty of talk about minerals, but personally I never saw any. In 1919 I was with an outfit headed for the Omolon River, a branch of the Kolyma, where the diggings were supposed to be good, but we never got there and on the way out were wrecked on King Island in the Bering Sea. We went as far as North Cape and the ice stopped us. Any gold got in that neighborhood is well earned.

There are quite a few diggings on the Anadyr River, but the bunch over there are reported to be hard to get along with.

Plenty of gold on the Sakalin Island where the Japs run things, but no chance there.

The chances of any gold in Siberia are very much against you, and anyway it will come very hard.

Why not try St. Lawrence Island? According to reports it has never been prospected, or, as far as that is concerned, there is enough unknown and unprospected land in Alaska to keep you busy for quite awhile.

Abyssinian Army

THERE ain't no such animal! In time of war everybody fights with what arms he can find, and that's all there is to it.

Request:—"I am a military man, trained in machine gunning, aviation and tactical strategy, and have been wondering if there is any chance of entering the Abyssinian army."

—J. STUART LUCY, Dunedin, New Zealand

Reply, by Capt. R. W. van Raven de Sturler:—Military service in Abyssinia—there is only one thing to be said: There is no such animal! I mean, there is no army in the sense as we whites employ the term. The Abyssinians are simply, each and every man,

called to fight when fighting is imminent; they have no armament such as we use and while there are a great many rifles and other guns in the country, they belong to the obsolete types mostly, because it is almost impossible to import high power rifles into the country. Those that lack shooting implements, use spears, clubs, etc., but as a whole they are excellent and brave fighters and will face any power if so directed by their native princes and commanders. I actually believe you would represent the whole army in yourself were you able to convince the emperor of the necessity of such an army. And then I would not envy you your job, to say the least.

To give you an example of what sort of people you would have to deal with, I am going to relate a little story which is authentic and sometimes quoted to describe the attitude of some of the lesser ruling princes and high officials: Up to some three years ago when the former "Minister of War" of Abyssinia, Fitaurari Hapta Giorgis, died, no airplanes were permitted to fly in or over Abyssinia, he having stated that, if the Lord had wished us humans to fly, He would have furnished us with wings instead of legs.

Since his demise the French and, I believe, the Germans too have sold him (the emperor) a few planes (some 2 or 3) which are operated by nationals of these countries who, however, do not hold any appointment or rank in any army; they simply are aerial chauffeurs for his Majesty Ras Tafari Makonnen who, in my opinion, though Jewish in appearance, must, to judge by his name, be of Scotch ancestry.

As regards machine guns, it is a well known fact that Ras Tafari some years ago ordered some European makes which, for one reason or excuse or another are still held by the French in Djibouti (French Somaliland) the Port of Entry to Abyssinia and which will, of course, never reach their destination; the French, British and Italians seem somehow to feel easier in the knowledge that, should some "impasse" occur some time, they will not have to face their own weapons.

TO GO to Abyssinia you can book on any steamer that touches or connects with another that stops at Aden, from where you can ferry across to Djibouti in from 10 to 12 hours or less, according to the weather, twice a week, then entrain to Addis Abbeba (2 to 3 days, since trains do not operate during night) and you are in Abyssinia's captial, the only capital in the world of an independent native empire.

If I were you, I would suggest that you travel from Addis A. across Abyssinia toward its Western borders at Gambela, enter British Africa and enjoy some fine big game shooting in Tanganyika, Uganda, Sudan or even the Congo and return to your country or Europe via Khartoum, down the white Nile by steamer, Wadi Halfa, Assuan, Luxor, Cairo to Port Said, from where you can make connections to go anywhere you like. If you can afford the time and expense, I am sure there is no better route to meet with Adventure with a capital A; I found it so, at least, some two years ago.

Swimming

KEEP your head down and your feet will stay up.

Request:—"How should the hands be held in the breast stroke? With fingers extended together or spread? Why can't I make any headway when I keep my head raised while swimming?"

—VERA HUCK, Evansville, Indiana

Reply, by Mr. L. de B. Handley:—In all swimming strokes the hands should be held so as to obtain a maximum of leverage on the water, i. e., palms flat, fingers and thumb extended and touching. Cupping the hands, or spreading the fingers, reduces leverage. Progress is impeded when the head is raised in swimming because the position of body then assumed causes the legs to sink and act as a brake, checking advance.

Bully Hayes

SEA WOLF, blackbirder, pirate and dandy, the mention of his name still strikes terror in the hearts of aged natives in the South Sea Islands.

Request:—"I wonder if you could cast some light on a question which has bothered me for many years? Just who was Bucko Hayes? His name crops up in most of the South Sea yarns, but there is never any definite information about him. That he was a desperado, a pirate and a fascinating character I know. My knowledge goes no further. Perhaps you could name some book which tells of him. I can't very well ask you to go into much detail on so lengthy a subject."

—EARL F. FELTON, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Reply, by Mr. James Stanley Meagher:—I do not know of any book which deals specially with the career of "Bully" Hayes (not "Bucko" as you have it) but he was a character around whom much has been written in fact and fiction. The outstanding incidents in his life are therefore fairly well known. He was of course a well known individual to old time sailormen who sailed the Pacific in his day. I have heard many stories from such sources and although some of them are probably true, one has to allow for hearsay and exaggeration and for the fact that stories of this kind usually take on added facts with each telling. I am giving you a condensed version of his career below, the facts of which are authentic and true as far as I know. At all events Captain Hayes was a real flesh and blood character.

Little is actually known of the early life of the famous South Sea pirate. He was believed to be a native of Cleveland, Ohio, and made his first voyage out of San Francisco as a youth in 1858. For a period of about twenty years he carried on a series of daring and bloody exploits, the scenes of which were not only confined to the Islands of the Pacific

but extended to the ports of Australia and the Orient and even to the Pacific Coast of the United States as well. His bloodiest record is written in the accounts of his activities as a "blackbirder" in the cannibal isles. The mentioning of his name still strikes terror into the hearts of a few aged natives of islands he was wont to visit.

He did a roaring trade for a time by taking on cargoes in the smaller ports of China, Japan, Australia and India and diverting the proceeds in every case to his own use. Whenever he found himself without a ship he set about to capture one forthwith, and sometimes singlehanded at that! One of the most daring captures of the latter nature was the taking of the brig *Leonora* in the harbor of Upolu in Samoa. He bullied the crew into submission and it was this characteristic which earned for him the sobriquet Bully Hayes.

In the early 70's Hayes had become such a menace to legitimate shipping in the Pacific that the U. S. Government sent out an expedition to hunt him down and arrest him wherever found. He was found living a life of ease in Upolu from the proceeds of some of his illicit gain. How he convinced Captain Meade of the U. S. S. *Narragansett* of his innocence and succeeded in making him believe that he was really the victim of unscrupulous traders and other enemies is told as one of the highlights of his career.

He swindled the authorities, the missionaries and the natives right, left and center, and whenever he found himself in a tight corner he seemed to be always able to convince others of his innocence. At one time he was arrested and sentenced to death by the Spaniards in the Philippines but was reprieved through the influence of the Catholic clergy when he declared he had been converted to Christianity. This dodge of embracing religion was one of his favorite tricks.

It was soon after his release in the Philippines that he came to the end of the trail. He perpetrated a swindle on the very missionaries who had befriended him and was forced to flee the islands. He stole a schooner and left for San Francisco, the port he started from on his nefarious career. The American authorities got wind of him when he was off the California coast and he had to run for it once more. He headed for the South Seas, no doubt with the idea of lying low in some island haven until the storm blew over. He never reached this destination.

One day at sea he started a fight with one of his own officers and the latter struck him over the head with a marlinspike and killed him. His body was cast over the side into the ocean which had for so long been the scene of his many crimes.

Hayes was a very fine physical specimen. Standing well over six feet tall, he was well proportioned and very strong. He was considered handsome and always wore a red beard which he kept carefully trimmed. He was a regular Beau Brummel in the matter of clothes and outfitted himself with the finest of seagoing togs. He was noted for his bland smile which seemed never to leave his countenance even when engaged in the bloodiest crime.

An aged and forgotten white woman died last year down in Levuka, Fiji Islands. Few knew she was the widow of the famous Captain Hayes. Since his death, fifty years ago, she had lived quietly in this little South Sea port.

Our Experts— They have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

They will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assume any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible.

1. **Service**—It is free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelope and *full* postage, *not attached*, are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union. Be sure that the issuing office stamps the coupon in the left-hand circle.

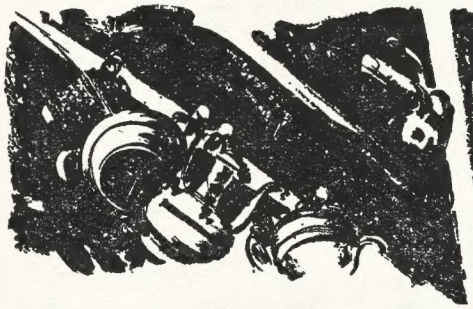
2. **Where to Send**—Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. **DO NOT** send questions to this magazine.

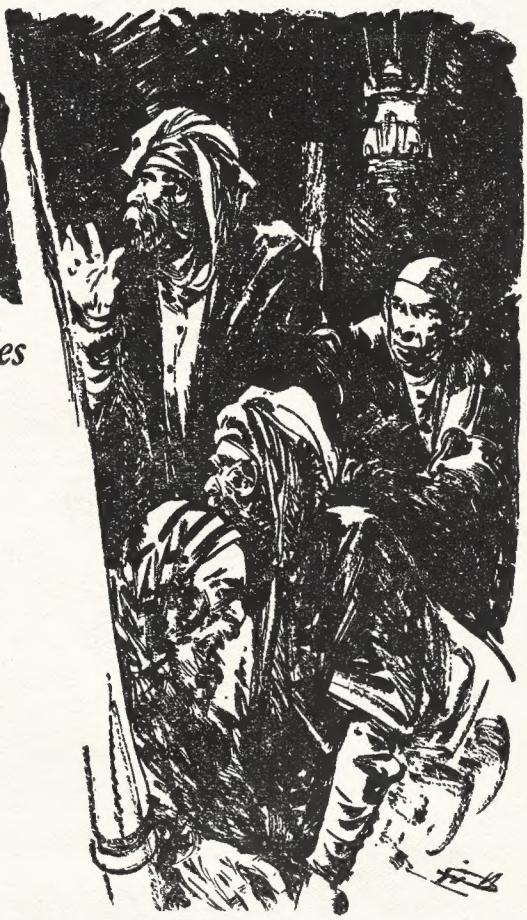
3. **Extent of Service**—No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.

4. **Be Definite**—Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.

A complete list of the "Ask Adventure" experts appears in the issue of the fifteenth of each month

THE TRAIL AHEAD—THE NEXT ISSUE OF *ADVENTURE*, JUNE 15th





Three Great Novelettes

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A BIT OF RED RIBBON

Algiers and Morocco—a henpecked husband finds peace in the French Foreign Legion.

By J. D. NEWSOM

◎

UNPROFITABLE IVORY

Abyssinia—a *Kingi Bwana* story by the author of "The Lost End of Nowhere."

By GORDON MacCREAGH

◎

KOTZEBUE

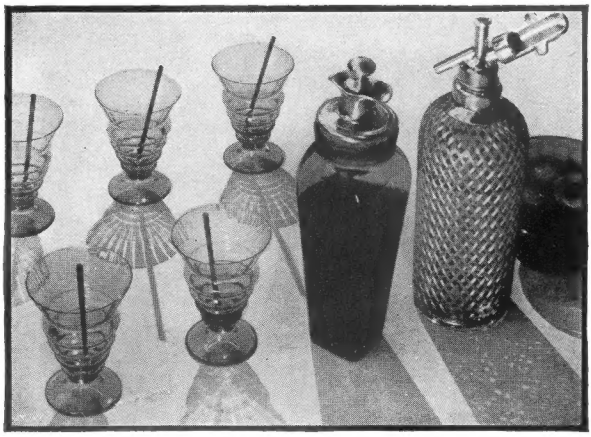
Alaska—intrepid adventurers on a thrilling gold hunt in the frozen wastes beyond the Arctic Circle.

By CAPT. H. H. ELKINTON

Also other fine stories by

GORDON YOUNG
GEORGE E. HOLT
GENERAL NOGALES
LARRY O'CONNOR
HOWARD E. DAVIS
F. ST. MARS
NATALIE B. SOKOLOFF

If your memory falters—



Just when you have the crowd gathered for a Silver Fizz or a Horse's Neck . . . Don't despair, there *is* a cure! Next to the "makings" keep a copy of this booklet with all the recipes—in best prohibition style—but need we say more to an ADVENTURE fan! Send today for the 125 ideas in our booklet
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